Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-NINE • NUMBER FOUR • APRIL 1990

THE CASE FOR MORE IMMIGRATION

Ben J. Wattenberg and
Karl Zinsmeister

Can the Palestinians Make Peace? / Daniel Pipes

Mencken on Trial / Joseph Epstein

My Two Weeks With Norman Mailer — A Story / Robert Riche

"There Go Our Little Jews" / David G. Roskies

Newspeak, Feminist-Style / Robert Lerner and Stanley Rothman

Why Whittaker Chambers Was Wrong / Charles Horner

Pynchon's Progress / Carol Iannone

Books in Review: Edward Norden/Fernanda Eberstadt/
Elizabeth Kristol/Craig S. Lerner/Robert Kagan

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Letters from Readers

Affirmative Action

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations to Thomas Sowell for "'Affirmative Action': A Worldwide Disaster" [December 1989]. The United Kingdom presents an interesting case of his "indigenous" example of preference turned inside out. Immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa, and the Indian subcontinent have—thanks to their self-elected spokesmen and the activist Left of British politics (plus a lot of shallow journalism)—acquired a patina of superior virtue placing them on a morally higher plane than the indigenous British who have lived on this island for some centuries. This has resulted in a number of policies, labeled "multicultural," which, in Manchester where I live, actually led to a murder in a local school when a resentful white bully knifed an Asian boy who had defied him. This took place in an atmosphere of bitterness directly caused by ethnically preferential policies in the Manchester school system.

A report on this incident was suppressed by the radically left-wing Manchester Council for two years, and finally published by the authors at their own expense. It is a devastating indictment of the so-called multicultural preferential policies of the Left. The only response of the electorally secure Manchester Council has been to shrug it off with the claim that the criticisms were noted and that things are "better now." But the policies continue. It is a depressing illustration of Mr. Sowell's remarks about the disastrous blend of politics and good intentions where these issues are concerned, and of the resistance of their proponents to plain facts—even bloodshed. Mr. Sowell's reference to social disaster is neither extreme nor melodramatic.

HERB GREER
Manchester, England

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The article by Thomas Sowell is superb. It highlights what I believe is a generally unacknowledged dark side of affirmative action, i.e., that it really represents base-line racism on the part of its advocates.

Specifically, the message of affirmative action to blacks in this country is that they are not good enough to succeed on their own. While rabid segregationists generally object to preferential programs on racist grounds, well-meaning liberals who insist on affirmative-action programs have in essence a similar view of the capabilities, intellect, and potential of blacks. The major difference between these groups is that the second set has good intentions. But as we know, the road to hell, etc., etc. . . .

If you continue to tell someone throughout his life that he cannot get into a school on his merits, get a job on his merits, win contracts based on his merits, you will eventually convince him that he does not merit his college admission, his job, and his way of life. Over time, you will convince him that he does not deserve what he has. . . .

Affirmative action has set back the self-esteem of blacks and other groups, notwithstanding the good intentions of its proponents.

ANDREW J. NEFF
Larchmont, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As usual, Thomas Sowell is a joy to read. His article is a scholarly treatment of a development I have watched, with fascination, over the last sixty-odd years—ever since I started working full time in 1928.

From my perspective, . . . the whole anarchic trend is summarized in Mr. Sowell's brief comment about "a whole group-consciousness industry that acquires a vested interest in agitating emotional issues," and his further comment that "The point is to create the appropriate climate for recriminations."

The "malcontents of civilization" (to paraphrase Sidney Hook) are ever with us. These malcontents (who must be distinguished from bona-fide rebels, who are a necessary catalyst in an open culture) are essentially destructive. The fact of their existence is not new; what is new is their unprecedented power and influence. And politicians toady to these elements. . . . This is the real heart of the problem which neither Thomas Sowell nor King Solomon can solve—not this side of Judgment Day, at any rate.

TOM HUMBLE
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The good news is that in

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" 'Affirmative Action': A Worldwide Disaster" Thomas Sowell exceeds even his own standards of clarity of expression, breadth of documentation, and depth of thought. The bad news is that it probably won't matter, since factual, logical arguments have little effect on quasi-religious beliefs.

In today's secular world, many persons no longer have deep religious beliefs, but they may still have religious feelings. If this need for a religious experience is not satisfied, it tends to find expression in such things as liberal politics, environmentalism, animal rights, gun control, disarmament, or some other cause or social program. The problem is that religious feelings tend to be associated not only with zeal but also with non-logical thinking. In science as in everyday life, when we confront a problem, we try one possible solution; if it does not work we try another. But in religion, we persist in doing what does not work so long as we perceive it as being "good."... And it is all too easy to mistake feeling good for doing good. In addition, believing that those who disagree with us are not just mistaken but *wrong*—that is, criminal or sinful—leads to intolerance. Non-logical thinking and contempt for one's opponents are not useful tools for solving problems in a democracy.

DAVID C. STOLINSKY
Los Angeles, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is a shame that all the important research Thomas Sowell has done to demonstrate conclusively that affirmative action is a worldwide disaster will have no effect on current or short- or medium-term public policy. Public policy with respect to affirmative action is based not on rational considerations but on the emotional perceptions of incompetent, fearful, guilt-ridden bureaucrats supported by academicians with similar attributes in response to threats and violence. It is fueled by continuous threats of further violence. . . .

Mr. Sowell's lone rational voice is lost amid the clamor that continually arises from the affirmative-action industry. . . .

SHELDON F. GOTTLIEB
Mobile, Alabama

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Can anyone deny that affirmative action is based on the presumption that racial and ethnic categories are mutually exclusive (somewhat like different species), meaning that no individual can have (or be acknowledged as having) ancestors in more than one of the official racial/ethnic classifications? . . .

Affirmative-action policies are designed to force or forcefully to encourage . . . fraudulent claims of belonging to the designated beneficiary groups. . . . Not only is this degrading for the people encouraged, or tempted, to make fraudulent racial claims, but it gives the designated beneficiary groups the double message that they can't stand on their own genetic feet. Why should people who proudly proclaim their opposition to racism demand the adoption of racist policies . . .?

Too many people on the political Left have succumbed to a Nazi-like fascination with simple-minded myths of blood and race, and their division of the world into "whites" and "people of color" is dangerously close to the mythology of "Aryans" versus "non-Aryans."

A. D. POWELL
Madison, Wisconsin

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thomas Sowell's examination of affirmative action is a cogent reminder that we have created a virtual parody of John Cheever's short story, "The Law," in which new laws must constantly be passed in order to repair the bad effects of previous laws. What we need to do is get back to the root cause of the problem, which is that *every* act of hiring is an act of discrimination. Since the employer must choose blindly from any number of qualified applicants, he has no choice but to discriminate. All our laws about who may be discriminated against only make matters worse. Why not attack the root cause and take away from the employer the right to discriminate?

Let the employer set objective qualifications for every job. Then let the qualified applicants decide for themselves by that most democratic of methods—competitive bidding. Low bid gets the job. If we adopted this sensible method of assigning jobs to people and assigning value to jobs, we would eliminate discrimination and any need for affirmative action. What is more, we would eliminate poverty and unemployment, because the free-market price of labor would automatically maintain equili-

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brium at the full-employment level. . . .

RICHARD A. DAVIS
Ashland, Ohio

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Although illuminating and intriguing, Thomas Sowell's dissection of affirmative-action policies on a global scale is heavy on analysis, short on blame, and devoid of prescriptive solutions.

Among the guilty parties worthy of condemnation, we should include: (1) every U.S. President (starting with the late Lyndon Baines Johnson) who used executive orders for that well-intended but dysfunctional purpose; (2) every federal and state legislative member who voted for such laws—retroactively; and (3) every federal and state judge, clerk, and/or mugwump who had a hand in issuing race- or gender-based fiats. As penance, they should have their healthy pensions attached!

At present, those directly affected by such policies are (euphemistically!) categorized as "overqualified" for race- or gender-based governmental largesse. We have suffered too long! Our restitution is now due. . . .

Here is a solution: using the aforementioned attached federal/state pensions to prime the pump, an immediate trust fund (interest-bearing, with cost-of-living increases) should be established under presidential executive order. Those overqualified for affirmative-action benevolence would receive (1) all back wages tax free (based on the last year of full employment—*not* subsequent involuntary underemployment); (2) full pardons on credit ratings; (3) restoration of lost housing; (4) federal payment of spousal and/or child support, in cases of broken marriages. . . .

DAVID C. PHILLIPS
Bakersfield, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . When I attended law school in the late 70's, there were several factions in the student body agitating for an increase in the percentage of places reserved for minorities. Many of the most vocal champions of this idea were white liberal students who insisted that their stance was the only morally correct position to take, period. The problem was that since there was a finite number of places in the school, for every person who received one because of his race or color, another, who would otherwise have been given that place, lost it because of *his* race or color. As Thomas Sowell's article points out, this kind of reverse discrimination causes bitterness and recrimination far in excess of the numbers involved, and it did so at our school also, since virtually every white who failed to get admitted blamed it on affirmative action whether that was true or not. Affirmative action thus became a bitterly contested issue which appeared to have no middle ground. To meet this problem I came up with what I modestly called the "Breen Plan for Voluntary Affirmative Action," which was printed in the law-school newspaper, and widely discussed.

The Breen plan encouraged all white students who believed in affirmative action to go to the dean of students, tell him their feelings, and ask that their seat in law school be turned over to a minority student who would not otherwise be admitted. They would then agree to drop out of law school, and sign a pledge never to attend another professional school. In this manner, pro-affirmative-action whites could act on their own beliefs without "imposing their morals on another.". . .

A couple of months later I interviewed the dean . . . on how well the Breen plan was progressing. You can imagine my surprise and dismay when he informed me that *not one single liberal* had come forward. . . . I was, in the words of Claude Rains of *Casablanca* fame, "Shocked! Yes, shocked!"

Still, I firmly believe that the Breen plan has great potential throughout our society. It can be expanded to apply to just about any educational or employment situation, allowing those who want certain minorities to receive special consideration for desirable jobs to act on their beliefs without stepping on the rights of others. . . . Such an example might provide the political steam necessary to force Congress to pass a bill mandating a federal Office of Total Equality. . . . Then that great dream of all right-thinking individuals, of a completely homogenized America, would at last be at hand. Surely, on that sweet day, we as a nation will have reached the liberal Promised Land.

TERRY BREEN
Wallisville, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Thomas Sowell's critique of affirmative action is superb and unflinching. . . .

Among the less publicized but more ironic consequences of the politicization of formerly meritocratic preserves is the growing influence of swing groups. This trend naturally penalizes those whose voting patterns are predictable, by making their success dependent on the victory of a particular political party, and increasing the likelihood that they will be taken altogether for granted.

To cite one recent example: some Jews have begun to lament the absence of any of their co-religionists from the Supreme Court. Were High Court appointments made solely on the basis of merit, conceivably two or three justices would be Jewish. But Supreme Court nominations, and certainly confirmations, are almost entirely political now, especially after the Bork fiasco. . . . With what result? Of the three newest additions to the Court, one is a white Protestant female, the other two, white Roman Catholic males. All belong to important but politically unpredictable sectors of the electorate—in noticeable contrast to the two recent failed nominees, a white male Protestant and a Jew. I mean no slight to the qualifications of the successful nominees, but the fact is that their supporters had a much more tangible political incentive to fight. . . .

This effective exclusion should not be lost on other groups who imagine that sheer numbers will invariably guarantee their success in a spoils system dominated by partisan considerations.

SETH A. HALPERN
Scarsdale, New York

THOMAS SOWELL writes:

The readers' generous praise is especially appreciated because the research and writing behind my study kept me up all night more than once, as I pressed to complete the study in time for it to be relevant to reconsiderations of "affirmative action" in the courts. As this effort suggests, I do not consider it impossible for facts or reasoning to influence the course of events, even in an area so dominated by unsupported political dogma. The few wavering limitations put on "affirmative action" from time to time thus far, beginning with the *Bakke* case twelve years

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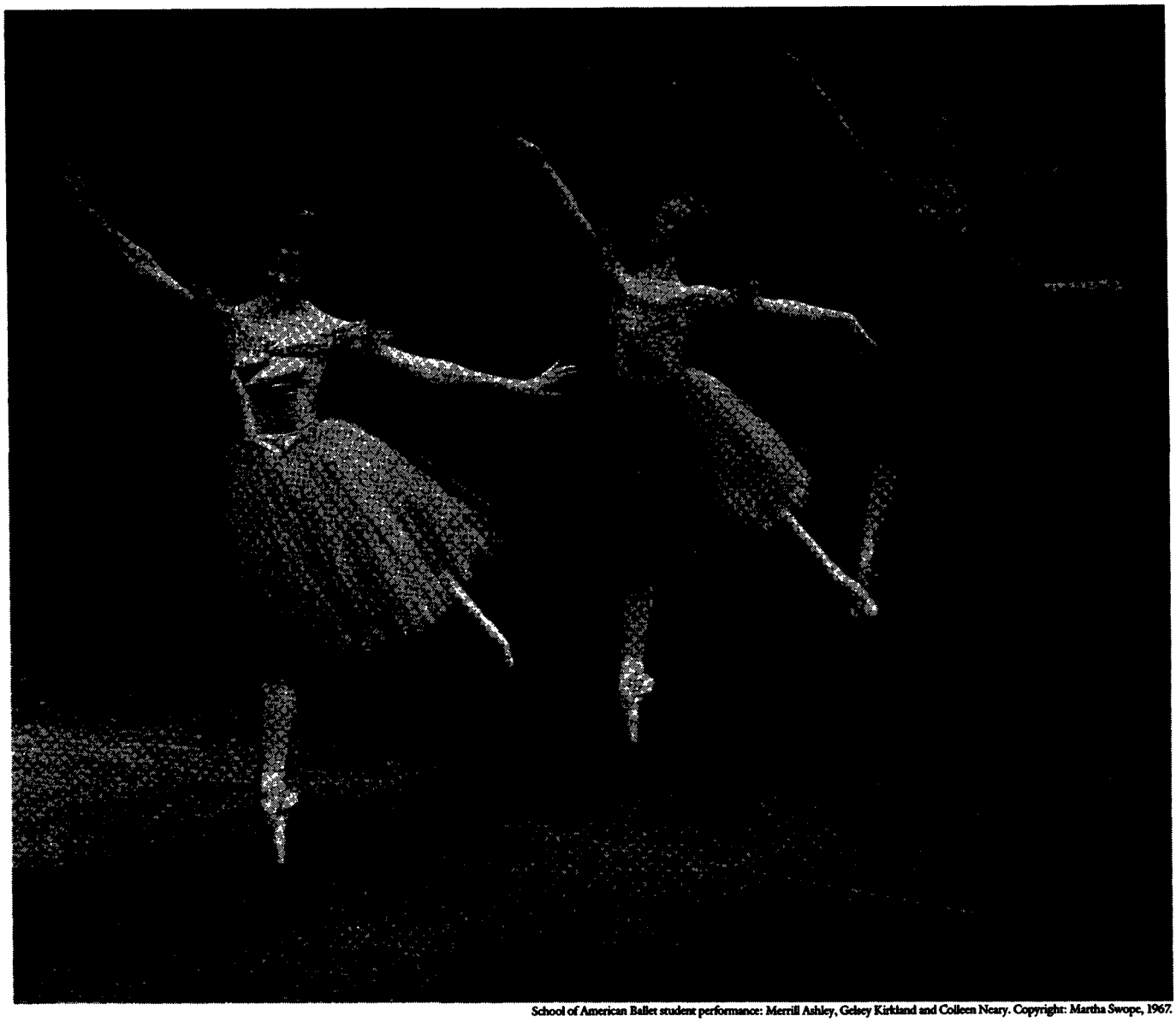

School of American Ballet student performance: Merrill Ashley, Gelsey Kirkland and Colleen Neary. Copyright: Martha Swope, 1967.

Thanks to the Library, American dance has taken great leaps forward.

American dance is more popular than ever, and one of the reasons is The New York Public Library's Dance Collection.

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ago, may reflect earlier efforts of people like Nathan Glazer and many others to try to talk sense in the middle of a crescendo of nonsense. With all this, however, I cannot feel optimistic in the sense of believing that the odds are better than 50-50 that this dangerous policy will be discontinued before it leads to the kind of polarization that has meant bloodshed in the streets in other countries. There simply does not seem to be any alternative to putting an all-out effort into preventing this needless tragedy from happening in America.

The Congress for Cultural Freedom

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One may differ about whether the Congress for Cultural Freedom was a "success" or not, but in "The Intellectuals & the Cold War" [December 1989] George Szamuely rides a strong hobby-horse in claiming that "liberal anti-Communism" had given up the struggle against totalitarianism, as the Congress expanded its activities.

Mr. Szamuely quotes Sidney Hook, from his memoirs, as saying that the Congress was "more interested in acquiring a kind of respectability in the eyes of predominantly nonpolitical . . . European intellectuals than in militant opposition to Communist cultural influences."

But—as one who was involved in Congress activities—I do not think this was true. There are differences as to how—in circumstances where one is often isolated—one gets a hearing or begins a process of gaining influence. I think that the Congress, with the encouragement of Manès Sperber and Raymond Aron, given their awareness of the European scene, made the judgment that "*militant* opposition," if that is a useful term, might be counterproductive. It was Ignazio Silone who, in 1955, initiated a Congress effort to open a dialogue with editors of Soviet journals, an effort that was broken off after the events in Hungary in 1956.

Mr. Szamuely quotes a contributor to the COMMENTARY symposium of September 1967 ["Liberal Anti-Communism Revisited"] to prove that liberals had surrendered their anti-Communist views. Yet two of the contributors to the symposium, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. and myself, both "liberal anti-Communists," stoutly defended the Congress, despite the revelations about CIA financing.

There is always a danger of rewriting or overlooking history when one rides a strong hobby-horse. Liberal anti-Communism was responsible, in the United States alone, for defeating Communist influence in the American Veterans Committee; in the trade-union movement (e.g., the CIO); and through liberal anti-Communists such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Hubert Humphrey, and the Americans for Democratic Action, it became a strong influence in the Democratic party.

To return to the Congress for Cultural Freedom, it is curious that Mr. Szamuely names a number of individuals who were "true to [the] task." But who was not? He implies that it may have been Michael Josselson, the administrative director of the Congress, who was not. I would suggest that he ask each of the persons he has named whether this was so. I do not think he ever knew or met Michael Josselson. *All* those who did, including Sidney Hook, appreciated the talents and sacrifices of this remarkable man.

DANIEL BELL
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Anyone who was active in the Congress for Cultural Freedom—as I was from 1950 to 1969—should hesitate to comment on a history of that organization. The temptation is too great to try and justify achievements which can be fairly assessed only by others, or to compare one's own recollections with those of an objective historian like Peter Coleman. It seems to me, however, that George Szamuely shares the general English and American lack of interest in, or knowledge of, the non-English-language journals sponsored by the Congress such as *Preuves, Tempo Presente, Cuadernos,* and *Mundo Nuevo.*

Last fall a collection of articles from *Preuves* was published by Julliard; earlier, the collected essays of the late Nicolà Chiaromonte, editor of *Tempo Presente,* were issued in five volumes, confirming the stature of this political thinker. No one who takes the trouble to read these books, which are still available, would share Mr. Szamuely's assessment of the Congress's orientation in Europe. Mr. Szamuely singles out individuals of special merit. If he omits the names of Ignazio Silone, Constantin Jelenski, Julian Gorkin, and Emir Monegal, it may be because authors who did not write in English or who were translated only infrequently have simply escaped his attention. Among the several persons Mr. Szamuely associates with "the best work of the Congress," the late Raymond Aron, for one, would have insisted that Michael Josselson's name be added to the list. The four others cited by Mr. Szamuely would, I am sure, agree.

FRANÇOIS BONDY
Zurich, Switzerland

GEORGE SZAMUELY writes:

Daniel Bell could not have read my article properly if he takes me to be suggesting that "liberal anti-Communism" was wholly ineffective in the struggle against totalitarianism. It was not the liberalism of the Congress for Cultural Freedom's anti-Communism that I criticized. Rather, I argued that what had started off as a tactical ploy by the Congress—namely, to position itself on the Left in order to win support for liberal democracy from the European intelligentsia (who, it was supposed, were largely on the Left)—came to be a goal pursued wholly for its own sake. What had started off as a sound enough policy came to be self-defeating in the long run.

The death of Stalin led to the end of a phase of Soviet foreign policy that was openly and ferociously anti-Western. As soon as the new Soviet leadership proclaimed its aim to be "peaceful coexistence," many intellectuals, particularly those on the Left, were all too ready to breathe a sigh of relief and take those two words at face value. It was at this point that the Congress's stubborn insistence on being, in Peter Coleman's words, "of the Left and on the Left" proved counterproductive. As Coleman recounts, at one conference after another held under the Congress's auspices, all the fashionable illusions of the time were given full expression: the cold war was over, substantial liberalization had taken place in the Soviet Union, convergence betwen the political systems of East and West was inevitable, and so on.

Similarly, whatever the rights and wrongs of American military involvement in Vietnam, there is no question that the attempt to

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prevent Ho Chi Minh from imposing his ruthless totalitarian regime on people who were no more enthusiastic about the prospect than Poles or Czechs or Hungarians had been was a continuation of the same World War II struggle for freedom for which the Congress had tried to win intellectual support. Yet Michael Josselson, the executive director, declared in 1967: "I agree with Senator McGovern that our deepening military involvement in Vietnam is the most regrettable diplomatic, political, and moral failure in our national history."

I never met Josselson, but I do not doubt that he was indeed a remarkable man. Much of the work the Congress did under his leadership was entirely commendable and I said as much in my article. But it would be too easy and too much like "rewriting or overlooking history" to praise the Congress for its successes, such as the launching of several outstanding magazines, while at the same time dismissing its failings as the result of having to operate in an unseasonable intellectual climate. Were the mid-70's, for example—immediately following upon a national humiliation in Southeast Asia, the removal from office of a conservative President, the West's meek acceptance of the terms of an oil cartel run by Third World tyrants—a more congenial period for the revival of arguments on behalf of free policies and free economies?

Given the limited space available I unfortunately had to concentrate on personalities and publications already familiar to English and American readers. François Bondy, in singling out the contributions of Nicola Chiaromonte and Ignazio Silone as well as those of publications like *Preuves* and *Tempo Presente,* has provided an important corrective to my article.

Eastern Europe

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Irwin M. Stelzer is to be congratulated for his fine article, "A Marshall Plan for Eastern Europe?" [January]. The question of whether the Soviet Union is undergoing permanent fundamental changes or temporary adjustments has not been explored sufficiently in the West's euphoria over the supposed end of the cold war. The article provides valuable insights into this question.

NOW THAT THE COLD WAR IS OVER...

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Mr. Stelzer has reservations about the Soviet Union but somewhat fewer ones about Poland. For the latter country he wants to stop short of a Marshall Plan, and for good reason. I wonder if it is not time to take a closer look at Eastern Europe and construct some possible scenarios that might result from our aid to "former" Soviet satellites.

In Eastern Europe we are now seeing the emergence of coalition governments with Communist participation. Historically, however, coalition governments which have included Communists in control of the levers of power have been—without exception—the immediate predecessors of total Communist takeover. Today we seem to be watching Communism in Eastern Europe take a step backward. This calls to mind Lenin's classic admonition to his comrades that they must occasionally take a step backward prior to leaping two steps forward.

Is the Russian bear leaving Eastern Europe with his tail between his legs or is he simply relinquishing total control temporarily in order to make these countries more palatable to Western pocketbooks?

In Poland the non-Communists have control over those institutions in society which can bring the economy into the 20th century. The Communists, however, control those organs of the state (the police and the military forces) that could retake the country after it has been restored by the West. For whatever reasons, it has never been the goal of Solidarity or the Catholic Church in Poland to remove Poland from the Warsaw Pact. Both organizations have stated explicitly that their goal is to work within the system.

In Czechoslovakia, while there is no question regarding the anti-Communist credentials of Vaclav Havel, he is President—a largely ceremonial post. Alexander Dubcek, the head of parliament, and Marian Calfa, the Prime Minister, are Communists, albeit "reform" Communists—whatever that may mean. We may gloat over Mr. Dubcek's restoration after his embarrassing ouster in 1968, but let us not forget that at that time he wanted to reform Communism in order to save it. He was only demoted to a lesser post—not a bad punishment as Communist discipline goes. . . .

In Rumania, the ouster of the Ceausescus was welcome news, but the National Salvation Front is composed largely of Communists. True, they are ousted Communists who ran afoul of the Ceausescus, but that was hardly difficult and cannot be regarded as a badge of honor. The new leader, Ion Iliescu, is a former member of the Communist party Central Committee in Rumania.

I believe that the West must take some time off from the media frenzy celebrating the defeat of Communism and ask the following questions: (1) Will coalition governments in Eastern Europe lead to a return to Communist governments once Western aid has rebuilt these countries? (2) In dealing with these coalition governments without stressing our dismay at Communist participation, are we asserting, de facto, that we acknowledge a qualitative difference among Communists—between the "reformers" and the Stalinists—and that we can do business with the former? (3) Absent local conditions, what could Eastern Europe do with Western aid that Soviet tanks could not reacquire in a matter of weeks? (4) Are we seeing the end of the Soviet empire as a predatory power or are we simply watching that country undergo a short-term tactical change whereby it relinquishes temporary control of its rimland?

Karl Marx was probably the last good Marxist. But all Soviet leaders, Mikhail Gorbachev included, have been good Leninists. There is no word in the Communist lexicon for defeat of their forces. There are circumstances that might appear to the non-Communist world to be defeat; they are times for regrouping, reorganizing, making tactical shifts, pumping the West for financial aid—and, most important, lulling the West into a sense of false security.

GLORIA M. STEWART
Thousand Oaks, California

IRWIN M. STELZER writes:

It would be foolish to quarrel with Gloria M. Stewart's warning that the Russian bear is not sufficiently tame to be treated as a house pet, and I have no intention of doing so. But heeding that warning is not the same thing as developing an economic policy for Eastern Europe that is in America's best interests.

No one can ignore the possibility—indeed, the likelihood—that Gorbachev has taken a page from his beloved Lenin's book. After all, *perestroika* is nothing more than a latter-day version of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP), a program adopted in 1921 to cope with the restlessness of Russia's starving peasants. The NEP included many of the features we now associate with Gorbachev's *perestroika*—greater reliance on markets, joint ventures between the Soviet state and foreign capitalists, and encouragement of cooperatives.

But the NEP did not include the abandonment of any basic goals of Communism. As Lenin pointed out: "We are retreating . . . in order . . . to take a running start and make a bigger leap forward." Gorbachev's version: ". . . *perestroika* . . . [is] the process of renewing socialism." The essence of Lenin's NEP, to quote again the words of Theodore Draper I quoted in my article, "was to use capitalists . . . against capitalism, to use capitalism against itself. This was the rationale for inviting foreign capitalism into Soviet Russia in the form of mixed enterprises and economic concessions."

Now there is *perestroika*. Whether it is the prelude to renewed Soviet expansion—the pause that refreshes—we do not and cannot know. If recent experience in Eastern Europe teaches anything, it is that our experts cannot predict events in that part of the world: we were all caught flat-footed not only by the pace, but by the direction of the changes there.

So we are left with a task more difficult than Miss Stewart suggests. She urges us to be aware of the danger of new Communist seizures of power from weak coalition governments. But does that mean we should do nothing to affect the probability that such recidivism will occur? Hardly.

So the hard question is how we attempt both to protect ourselves against the possibility of resurgent Russian imperialism, and to increase the probability that Russia's imperial retreat will be made permanent.

Surely the measured program I suggested in my article is our best bet: humanitarian aid; assistance in solving environmental problems that have international consequences; removal of trade barriers that prevent Eastern European coun-

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tries from reaping the benefits of true economic efficiencies (although repealing Jackson-Vanik may be premature); technical assistance.

This policy is notable for what it excludes: no government-to-government loans to shore up ailing state-owned monopolies; no debt relief unless such relief genuinely increases the probability of eventual repayment; no government bailouts for banks that repeat the errors they made in Latin America.

Combined with a continued military presence in Europe, and the maintenance of our defense establishment at sensible and efficient levels, the economic program I set out in my article seems to meet Miss Stewart's requirements. At least I hope it does.

Gorbachev & Khrushchev

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In "What *Glasnost* Has Destroyed" [November 1989], Leon Aron's quotations and the figures he cites are impressive, but I think his conclusions are a bit rushed. This is understandable—each period in history is tempted to believe in its uniqueness; fortunately that is not always the case. Thus, I would not state so categorically that upheaval under Gorbachev goes "far beyond anything that happened [in the Khrushchev years] between 1956 and 1964." Opening the floodgates, releasing millions of people from Hades to life; denouncing Stalin (which seems easy now, like crossing the Atlantic, but try doing it the first time); sending investigators into the KGB den and uprooting the reptiles (Gorbachev's *glasnost*, by contrast, has not touched the present-day KGB, while his *perestroika*, if anything, has made it even stronger); publishing Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*—all this was a real feat. Please don't misunderstand me. I am not trying to glorify the nasty clown who built the Berlin Wall, sent missiles to Cuba, machine-gunned children on the streets of Budapest, and who had his own, not necessarily altruistic, reasons for overhauling the KGB—but I am simply proposing a more realistic look at the past which might help us to be sober in the present and wise about preparing for the future.

So let us be sober for a while and analyze what has happened in Gorbachev's Soviet Union and who, so far, has gained and who has lost.

The system gained the most. Those who sincerely believe that the replacement of some of the most flagrantly corrupt, rigid, and stupid of Chernenko's and Brezhnev's protégés with those of Gorbachev signifies the death of the system are dreaming a beautiful dream. The system got the *peredyshka* (respite) it so badly needed. The shells from the outside (Reagan's determination during his first term in office) and from the inside were hitting too close to the *dachas*.

The next to gain were the restless intelligentsia (a minuscule segment of society) who can now read in thick journals what they read

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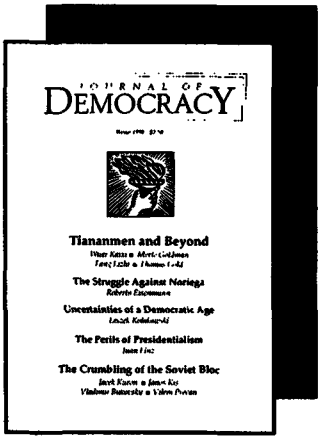

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before in typewritten *samizdat* manuscripts, and who may now travel abroad whenever they can get an invitation. Gorbachev was immensely wise in bribing them this way, so that they would stop rocking the boat and become his allies. And very useful ones, too, since they bring back badly needed gadgets and contacts from the West. For the 99 percent of the population who are not members of the intelligentsia and who do not have money and connections to visit the West, the fact that they can now read (if they care to) in thick journals that they are incompetent alcoholics and that their country's standard of living is the same as Ethiopia's is of minor comfort, since they knew it all along. Besides, when the time comes to shoot, what is written in thick journals rapidly becomes irrelevant, as the events in Beijing prove so vividly. China's *perestroika* was going on ten years longer than the Soviet's. Even with the enlightened Deng (of *Time* magazine fame) at the helm, the switch to classical Stalinism was accomplished with the snap of a finger.

So who are the potential disastrous losers? Why, we, of course. While lullabying us with admissions of past "mistakes," Gorbachev, through his surrogates, keeps committing exactly the same "mistakes" in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Cuba, and elsewhere, while his personal power grows ever more awesome. The "brutal dictator" Pinochet campaigned for his presidency for months and lost, while the enlightened General Secretary of the Communist party needed exactly 37 minutes to be "elected" President of the USSR.

Instead of worrying so much about that new "beast . . . [who] slouches toward Moscow to be born," we should probably worry a bit more about the old one who is still very much alive.

LEON STEINMETZ
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Leon Aron's conspectus of the destruction of Soviet official ideology is extraordinary. But surely the very ferment limned in his essay belies his ominous conclusion. To be sure, Russia's history teaches caution not hope. But why is Russia inexorably doomed to endure yet another odious tyranny? Why should democratic forces in Soviet society not turn to the 1918 Constituent Assembly and to the political opposition that was finally crushed by the Bolsheviks in 1921 as exemplars of inspiration?

JACOB HEILBRUNN
National Interest
Washington, D.C.

LEON ARON writes:

I find myself agreeing with some of Leon Steinmetz's observations and disagreeing with others. Let me dispose of the points of agreement first.

There is no doubt that the Soviet Union, which is now attempting to traverse an enormous space from totalitarianism to authoritarianism, is very much behind Chile under Pinochet. Free trade unions, independent political parties, freedom of travel and residence, privately owned mass media, an independent judiciary, and an independent and powerful church—all these are yet to come to the USSR. Pinochet's running for the presidency, as opposed to Gorbachev's, in essence, appointing himself president, is only one of many differences between the two types of regimes—none of them in Moscow's favor.

It is equally indisputable that until the Soviet people control their nation's foreign policy, the Soviet Union will continue to aid its Third World clients. In the meantime, unless the West puts a prohibitive price tag on such activity by tying its financial and technological assistance to the Soviet Union (which is now being rendered unconditionally) to Soviet disengagement from the Third World, the Kremlin will be happy to eat its cake and have it too.

While I would be the last to belittle Khrushchev, there are important qualitative differences between Khrushchev's Thaw and Gorbachev's *glasnost*. Having spent all his life building a Stalinist Russia and profiting in the process enormously, Khrushchev attacked Stalin but not Stalinism. It was permitted during the Thaw to bemoan the fate of a few hundred leading Communists (excluding Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Bukharin) who were shot in 1937-38, but not that of millions who perished before and after. While *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* slipped into print, who could doubt that Khrushchev would have prohibited the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago* and would have ordered its author arrested immediately?

More importantly, every piece of legitimizing Soviet mythology, the destruction of which was the subject of my piece, was as secure under Khrushchev as it had been under Stalin. Khrushchev never so much as questioned, and would never have allowed anyone else to question, the necessity of collectivization and industrialization—both called "Stalinist" by Gorbachev in a recent speech. Similarly Khrushchev's "anti-religious campaign" was vicious and destructive. More important still, while revising the Stalinist thesis of the inevitability of war between East and West, Khrushchev did not dissent, or brook any dissent, from the Leninist/Stalinist vision of the future as exemplified in his notorious slogans, "We will bury you!"; "Communism in twenty years!"; and "To catch up and surpass America!" In short, to question the core Soviet economic and political dogmas of Stalinism was as impossible under Khrushchev as it was under Stalin—albeit incomparably less dangerous.

Contrary to Mr. Steinmetz's assertion, a huge majority of the Soviet people did not know before *glasnost* how miserable their life was compared with the rest of the world. And, judging by what I read in the Soviet press and the conversations I had in Moscow recently, this revelation did matter very much: it has forced a reappraisal of the inhuman sacrifices made under the party's "leadership." When Soviet citizens demonstrate, as they did last fall, with mock slogans like "Catch up and surpass Africa," a profound sense of national humiliation carries the seeds of a radical break with the entire system responsible for this shame.

Access to the outside world has rapidly moved beyond unimpeded listening to the Voice of America and Radio Liberty (both jammed under Khrushchev, as they were under Stalin) and even beyond access to Western publications (*Time* can be purchased on Moscow newsstands for 3 rubles). The Soviet people can now travel! And those who travel abroad are no longer members of the *nomenklatura* or intelligentsia but tens of thousands of the Soviet hoi polloi. (I invite Mr. Steinmetz to visit New York, especially parts of Brooklyn, Queens, and Washington Heights.)

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The comparison with China seems inappropriate because China before Tiananmen had had no *glasnost*. Criticism of the system's fundamentals was not allowed. Deng, therefore, should be compared to Khrushchev rather than to Gorbachev. And while Gorbachev may yet have his Tiananmen, Khrushchev *did* have one: on June 2, 1962 in Novocherkassk, where 24 striking workers were killed and seven people were later executed after a secret trial.

Finally, I believe we should recognize a good thing when we see it. How can the Soviet system possibly gain from the destruction of its legitimizing mythology? How can we possibly lose? Of course, a relapse into neo-Stalinism is quite possible. But as in the pre-1989 Eastern European states, such a regime would be based solely on terror, and would be just as fragile as Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and the others proved to be.

I am grateful to Jacob Heilbrunn for forcing me to clarify the conclusion of my article. For decades the Left has propagated a pernicious and, I have always felt, racist argument: democratic liberties are good for Westerners but the East Europeans, the Ethiopians, the Cubans (and, certainly, the Vietnamese, Chinese, and Russians) are "different"—they, not to put too fine a point on it, like to be slaves. (Quite recently a representative of a very significant media outlet admonished me for doubting that cheap state-subsidized bread was more important to the Poles than democracy.) Besides, such people add, as with mores and aesthetics, "Who are we to judge" whether one political system is better than another?

Having grown up among the Russian people, I am quite sanguine with respect to their desire and capability for democracy. The amazingly rapid maturation of the Supreme Soviet and the emergence and consolidation of Solidarity-like workers' movements are very promising signs. But as Andrei Sakharov said in his last public speech a few hours before his death, the people's "disenchantment makes it impossible for this country to follow an evolutionary road in its development." The lugubrious note at the end of my article was sounded because the road to a Russian democracy looks to me increasingly tortuous. It may lead to the establishment of a Jaruzelski-like military-KGB regime and the increasingly violent backlash it would provoke. And as Pushkin wrote, *"Ne privedi Gospod' uvidet' Russkiy bunt—bessmyslenny i besposhadniy"*—"May God save us from seeing a Russian rebellion—senseless and merciless."

The Jewish People

To the Editor of Commentary:

David Vital wants the rest of us to avoid using the Holocaust as a primary reference point in relations between Jews and non-Jews ["Power, Powerlessness & the Jews," January]. If we continue to remember this event and the neighboring Gentile world that was willing to accommodate it, he warns, we will destroy our "inner life and stability." . . . I disagree. The remembrance of these events has charged me with power now for four decades. . . .

Where I go to the mat seriously with Mr. Vital is over his astounding assertion that the Holocaust is not in the same class with the Crusades and other "massacres, decimations, and slaughters" . . . of European history. This assertion flies in the face of the immense body of research that has been compiled since the end of World War II on the origins and history of anti-Semitism and its relation to the Holocaust. . . . Most of this research has been done by contemporary Christian scholars and theologians . . . burdened with the uncomfortable and embarrassing possibility that perhaps Christianity might somehow be implicated in the Holocaust.

It took some deep soul-searching, but individuals like James Parkes, Alan Davies, Douglas Hare, John Townsend, Monika Hellwig, Gregory Baum, Edward Flannery, Douglas Hall, Conrad Moehlman, A. Roy Eckardt, and the incomparable Rosemary Radford Ruether, to name but a few, went into print and courageously exposed the cancer of Jew-hatred that has so rotted the foundations of Christendom. The discoveries of these dedicated researchers confirmed their worst fears: the so-called "teachings of contempt" toward the Jewish people, going back to earliest Christian writings, did bear a direct responsibility for the pogroms and massacres of which the Holocaust was only the latest and technologically most successful. . . . It dawned upon these scholars that the seeds of the Holocaust had been planted long ago by Origen and St. Augustine and St. Jerome and St. John Chrysostom and Gregory the Great and Martin Luther and that these seeds had indeed borne the bitter fruit of world indifference to dying Jews. . . .

As a token step, Vatican II and the World Council of Churches finally condemned these teachings, but the condemnation, unhappily, has never reached down to the level of local parishes or ministries. . . . On Sunday mornings week after week all over the world, Christian children are still faithfully drilled in how the evil Jews killed the Son of God and thus invited the Father's wrath for all eternity. . . .

Contrary to Mr. Vital, Jews must keep this knowledge and memory in mind as a reference point in dealing with the world. . . . It is the only way they can be forearmed—the only way they can lessen the sense of powerlessness with which Mr. Vital is rightfully concerned. . . .

Stanley P. Kessel
Hollywood, Florida

To the Editor of Commentary:

David Vital's article exposes the depth of the political malaise of the Jewish people as well as their political ignorance.

The fact that even as we enter the final decade of this bloodstained century the Jewish people have not yet become a coherent and potent political force offers bitter testimony to how little we have learned from the Holocaust, and even more bitter testimony to the psychopathology that remains pervasive within the Jewish nation. The Jewish people have far from recovered from . . . the persecutions endured by the Diaspora, or from the self-delusions of emancipation. The basis of our dilemma lies in our lack of collective self-confidence and unwillingness to act as a nation in a consistent and independent manner. . . .

Our lack of self-confidence is the result of persecution through the ages. . . . The problem was exacerbated even further by emancipation, when the Jews lost their connection to their ancient, proud heritage. Many became dependents, sometimes even lackeys, of the dominant Gentile (especially Christian) society. Instead of demanding respect, the Jews wanted to be loved.

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And this is where most Diaspora Jews, and even some Israelis (mostly on the Left), stand today! . . .

Examples of Jewish self-deprecation abound, especially regarding the issue of Israeli nationhood and power. In the Diaspora . . . and even in Israel, . . . there are many who eschew and ridicule the notion of Hebrew national power, of Hebrew national honor. . . . Who else in this world places a concept such as "purity of arms" over national preservation? Who else places love for one's enemies over pressing national exigencies? No one but the Jews! . . .

This is the basic weakness of the Jewish community, especially in the United States. It is a weakness based on a poor self-image, on a lost national manhood and pride incompletely regained, on an obsequious desire to please others. The Hebrew nation will never be free, never be respected and honored, never be at peace until its members learn to love themselves, until they have pride in their past, their heritage, and their legitimate and manly nationhood.

LAWRENCE A. GILBERT
Dayton, Ohio

DAVID VITAL writes:

I don't know what Stanley P. Kessel means by "going to the mat" with me; nor do I understand why he regards my assertion that the Holocaust was not of a class with the many other massacres and slaughters mounted against the Jews of Europe in the course of their exile as "astounding." Surely, the perfectly simple and straightforward—indeed, rather commonplace—point, that the destruction of European Jewry by the German Reich was in certain respects unique, is beyond argument. It was unique quantitatively, because European Jewry was for all intents and purposes destroyed; and qualitatively because total or near-total destruction was precisely the object of the exercise the Nazis had set themselves.

That modern (not excluding German) anti-Semitism had sprung in part from soil well-fertilized by centuries of Christian teaching is equally beyond reasonable dispute; and to that extent I agree with Mr. Kessel. Why he thought I might believe otherwise, I cannot imagine. Of course the Roman Catholic and the other Christian churches played a role—a cardinal role—in the creation of the twin circumstances that made Treblinka and other such places possible: the forcing of the Jews to the pariah margins of civil society and the poisoning of the minds of their neighbors against them. On the other hand, as *institutions* the churches neither instigated nor promoted nor, it seems, even desired the Jews' total physical annihilation. Unlike Mr. Kessel, I think it right to say so, and to remember that it can serve no useful or decent purpose to argue otherwise.

Lawrence A. Gilbert's letter is of another order. Some of his terms puzzle me: I do not understand what (in the 20th century) is meant by the "Hebrew nation": and I would have thought that it is *approval*, not "love," that much (though not all) of post-emancipatory Jewry craves. But if Mr. Gilbert's language is ferocious, his thesis is important and he touches—rightly, in my view—on a nerve that deserves to be exposed. The difficulty is that he posits a "nation." Is there one? Or is all that we are left with the shadow of what was once, indeed, a single and coherent, if scattered, people?

"Between Passovers"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read the article, "Between Passovers," by Ruth R. Wisse [December 1989] and it moved me to tears. . . . More power to her for such splendid writing.

BARNETT BITTNER
Albuquerque, New Mexico

ABC

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Jessica Gress-Wright's article, "ABC and Me" [January], is outstanding for its lack of interest in the content of child-care arrangements. But since a discussion of that matter might be too lengthy here, perhaps it is sufficient to note that the author was seeking child care for fifty hours a week at $5,000 per year. So much for the "free market."

VERA ENDIG
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

My, what a lot of research and hand-wringing when a short look at the facts might have saved the Gress-Wright household much grief. Jessica Gress-Wright states: "The job meant everything to me, because without my salary we literally could not eat." Several paragraphs later she lets on that the cheapest solution to her day-care crisis is an *au pair* girl, at $5,000 a year, which works out to $96.15 a week. That plus the cost of the *au pair*'s food is more than enough to put food on the Gress-Wright table, with the extra added bonus that this physically stressed mom can have all week to do her cleaning *and* get to be the one who provides the emotional and intellectual environment for her children during their first crucial years. To reap all these benefits, all she has to do is quit her job. Is that such a shocking idea? Presumably, if she had wanted to be apart from her offspring for fifty of their waking hours a week, she would not have had them in the first place.

This more leisurely life at the Gress-Wright household would also give the author and her husband time for still more clear thinking. She states that she was "unexpectedly" pregnant with Katie, their third child. This from a woman who can put together a time-and-motion study on a computer in her nonexistent spare time, the wife of a man pursuing an advanced degree at Stanford University? In five years, when all the children are in school, Mrs. Gress-Wright can resume her career, unless there are any more "unexpected" pregnancies.

One reason there is so much difficulty in formulating a national child-care policy is that many of its most strident advocates are people who do not need child care at all; they can afford to take care of their own children, but prefer not to. The only issue that Congress should be addressing is child care for truly poor families with no other options. For the most part, these will be one-parent households. That is a welfare problem, and one that the nation can afford. We cannot afford baby-sitting services for middle- and upper-income people who do not wish to deal with the reality that in a life well-lived there are priorities to consider and choices to be made.

KAREN STENBO SAPOLSKY
Belmont, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was very interested in Jessica Gress-Wright's "ABC and Me" because I was a licensed family day-care provider in California during the period she is describing, approximately 1987-89.

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IS THE CURRICULUM BIASED?

A Statement by the National Association of Scholars

American higher education is facing widespread demands to eliminate the allegedly "Eurocentric" and "patriarchal" bias of the curriculum. While the details vary from campus to campus, these demands tend to focus on four objectives:

- *that the "canon" be revised to include more works by blacks, other ethnic minorities, and women;*
- *that "the issues of race, gender, and class" be introduced into a greater variety of courses;*
- *that more courses in women's studies and minority studies be developed;*
- *that courses in women's studies and/or minority studies be required of all undergraduates.*

Various justifications are commonly proffered for making these changes. It is alleged that:

- *works by minorities, women, and Third World authors have been excluded from the curriculum;*
- *minority and female students feel alienated and their educational progress is retarded by being asked to study works primarily by white males;*
- *in order to overcome their own prejudices, white males must become acquainted with the cultures and problems of minorities and with the perspectives and problems of women;*
- *the traditional curriculum represents the hegemony of Western culture, covertly supports a status quo inherently oppressive of women and minorities, and is unfairly imposed on students from different cultures;*
- *the traditional desiderata of truth, objectivity, and critical intelligence can be met only by adding the perspectives of women and minorities and by facing up to the new questions they raise;*
- *an increasingly diverse society and interdependent world require that our citizens gain greater understanding of different cultures.*

The **National Association of Scholars** *disputes* the first five of these arguments and believes that the last entails something other than the changes being proposed.

First, any work, whether formerly neglected or widely known, should be added, retained, or removed from the curriculum on the basis of its conformance to generally applicable intellectual and aesthetic standards. A sound curriculum cannot be built by replacing those standards with the principle of proportional representation of authors, classified ethnically, biologically, or geographically.

Second, the idea that students will be discouraged by not encountering more works by members of their own race, sex, or ethnic group, even were it substantiated, would not justify adding inferior works. Such paternalism conveys a message opposite to the one desired.

Third, other cultures, minority subcultures, and social problems have long been studied in the liberal arts curriculum in such established disciplines as history, literature, comparative religion, economics, political science, anthropology, and sociology. But more important, mere acquaintance with differences does not guarantee tolerance, an ideal Western in origin and fostered by knowledge of what is common to us all.

Fourth, the idea that the traditional curriculum "excludes" the contributions of all but males of European descent is patently false. From their beginnings, Western art and science have drawn upon the achievements of non-Western societies and since have been absorbed and further enriched by peoples around the globe. That the liberal arts oppress minorities and women is yet more ludicrous. Even if the curriculum were confined to thought strictly European in origin, it would still present a rich variety of conflicting ideas, including the very concepts of equality and freedom from oppression invoked by those who would reorient the curriculum.

Fifth, while diversity of background is valuable to the discussion of issues to which those differences are germane, objectivity is in general not enhanced but subverted by the idea that people of different sexes, races, or ethnic backgrounds necessarily see things differently. The assertion that cognition is determined by group membership is itself an example of stereotypic thinking which undermines the possibility of a true community of discourse.

Sixth, the study of the traditions and achievements of other nations and of ethnic subcultures is important and should be encouraged. But this must proceed in a manner that is intellectually honest and does not serve as a pretext for inserting polemics into the curriculum. Furthermore, "multicultural education" should not take place at the expense of studies that transcend cultural differences: the truths of mathematics, the sciences, history, and so on, are not different for people of different races, sexes, or cultures, and for that reason alone their study is liberating. Nor should we further attenuate the study of the traditions of the West. Not only is knowledge of those traditions essential for any evaluation of our own institutions, it is increasingly relevant to our understanding of other nations, which, in striking testament to the universality of the values they embody, are rapidly adapting Western practices to their own situations.

The **National Association of Scholars** is in favor of ethnic studies, the study of non-Western cultures, and the study of the special problems of women and minorities in our society, but it opposes subordinating entire humanities and social science curricula to such studies and it views with alarm their growing politicization. Efforts purportedly made to introduce "other points of view" and "pluralism" often seem in fact designed to restrict attention to a narrow set of issues, tendentiously defined. An examination of many women's studies and minority studies courses and programs discloses little study of other cultures and much excoriation of our society for its alleged oppression of women, blacks, and others. The banner of "cultural diversity" is apparently being raised by some whose paramount interest actually lies in attacking the West and its institutions.

We urge our colleagues to demand clear explanations and cogent arguments in support of the proposals being so rapidly brought before them, and to reject any that cannot be justified. The curriculum is and should be open to change, but we must rebut the false charges being made against existing disciplines. We must also reject the allegations of "racism" and "sexism" that are frequently leveled against honest critics of the new proposals, and which only have the effect of stifling much-needed debate.

Copies of this statement or additional information about the **National Association of Scholars** and its activities, including its Fellows Program, Research Center, Speakers Bureau, state and regional affiliates, conferences, local membership events, executive and faculty search services, and its quarterly *Academic Questions*, may be obtained by writing to the **National Association of Scholars, Suite 250 East, Twenty Nassau Street, Princeton, NJ 08542**, or by calling **609-683-7878**.

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The article is not a well-reasoned, logical argument against regulating child care. It is, instead, a howl of outrage at the various factors that make maintaining a home and raising children so extremely difficult in her situation. Along with long descriptions of her housing costs and problems, her pregnancy-induced disability, and her unaccommodating boss, Mrs. Gress-Wright rails against each of the child-care options that failed her. Her "licensed-professional" day-care mother was too cold and rigid; she actually expected the children's parents to remember their responsibilities such as providing snacks for their children or paying extra when picking their children up late. Her *au pair* left after two months. Other options, such as nannies, were too expensive. There was not enough child care available, even in the day-care centers.

Mrs. Gress-Wright found herself starting to mourn the 50's as a "paradise lost." No doubt back then child care was cheap, easily available, flexible, and warm. Naturally, that kind of care was most often provided by the mothers of the children themselves. They chose, or were forced by circumstances, to provide child care rather than hire it.

Now that so many more people choose, or are forced by circumstances, to hire child care rather than provide it themselves, is it unreasonable for there to be some regulation of this field? Mrs. Gress-Wright says "parents of all classes favored family day care. . . ." California requires licensing for family day care where the children of more than one family are cared for (excluding the provider's children). Its sensible regulations include: an inspection of the home for safety, toys available, and sleeping places; screening of all adults in the home for TB; fingerprinting all adults for background checks; filing a chart of emergency exits and emergency phone numbers.

A basic license is granted, without charge, for six children, of whom three may be under age two. Believe me, one person is stretched to the limit with six young children to care for. It is a very labor-intensive profession. Once the license is granted, the provider sets hours, care provided, and fees for herself. In contrast to the remarkably high prices Mrs. Gress-Wright was quoted for child care in the Stanford area, an average price for full-time day care in Southern California was $75.00 a week, or $1.50 an hour for fifty hours a week (which includes a parent's full-time work day, plus commute).

Mrs. Gress-Wright feels that providers are greedily pursuing "what the free market has failed to give them, a restricted profession with high pay." Rather, as she discovered when it was so difficult for her to find and keep people to do child care, it is already a self-restricted profession because of its long hours, low pay, and low status. People do not eagerly vie for the position of day-care provider. And for this situation to change more than slightly will require greater incentives than extra tickets to Disneyland.

HOLLY ZIMMERMAN
Long Beach California

JESSICA GRESS-WRIGHT writes:

Karen Stenbo Sapolsky says that if we had sat down and reckoned carefully, it would have been evident that I could afford to stay home with my children and suffered less to boot. But her "short look at the facts" appears to exclude simple arithmetic. I refer her to page 31 of my article. One doesn't need a computer to calculate that if $27,000 of housing costs took 90 percent of my husband's after-tax income, then the remaining disposable income, if I had quit work, was not $5,000+ for food, but $3,000, or $57 a week, for absolutely everything over and above housing. Welfare allots more for food stamps alone.

But there is worse to come. Miss Sapolsky evidently thinks my children are straight out of *Lord of the Flies*. How else to explain the spectacle of a pregnant mother, virtually disabled and in constant pain, who prefers work to staying home with her small children?

But if Miss Sapolsky thinks little of my budget and my children she thinks still less of my politics. She places me firmly among the "strident advocates" of a "national child-care policy" who love their jobs more than their offspring and clamor for a federally subsidized "baby-sitting service for middle- and upper-income people who do not wish to deal with the reality that in a life well-lived there are priorities to consider and choices to be made." I don't know what article Miss Sapolsky was reading. It certainly wasn't mine.

On page 32, I quote Congressman Stephen Solarz as saying "'Look at Social Security. Compare that to welfare. Programs for the poor don't fare nearly as well as those perceived to benefit the middle class.'" I quoted him to show that the promise of a middle-class child-care subsidy in the Act for Better Child Care Services (ABC) is the cynical sugar-coating on a political poison pill. ABC is bad not because it enables middle-class parents to evade responsibility for rearing their young, as Miss Sapolsky implies. ABC is bad because, once swallowed, its costs and regulations will prevent parents from *assuming* that proper responsibility.

Moreover, while ABC is bad for the bourgeoisie, it is positively nasty to the poor. It lays the heaviest burden of new regulation and bureaucracy on the very care the poor use most: informal day care by friends and relatives. Any federal aid for child care should be targeted at the working poor, and it should be structured in a way that permits the parents to choose the care they want for their children, whether it be grandma upstairs or the religious center down the block. Both have been discouraged under proposed versions of ABC because of elaborate regulations and contracting requirements and because of prohibitions on any form of religious expression.

While I don't think much of Miss Sapolsky's logic, I think a great deal of her values. If she had read a little more closely, she would have found a friend where she thought she saw a foe. We don't need a child-care policy, we need a *family* policy. Moreover, we need a family policy which fosters parental responsibility instead of discouraging it, which helps the poor instead of harming them, and, above all, a policy which has as its chief goal the welfare and happiness of the child.

Contrary to Vera Endig, I should have thought I went into the content of child-care arrangements at great length indeed in my article. Concrete detail taken from real life seemed the best way to illustrate the perverse consequences of current misguided attempts to legislate affordability, quality, and availability of child-care arrangements, both in California and federally. I get the feeling that Miss Endig thinks expensive care, or "official" outside care, is better for children.

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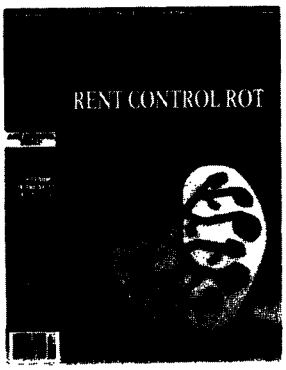

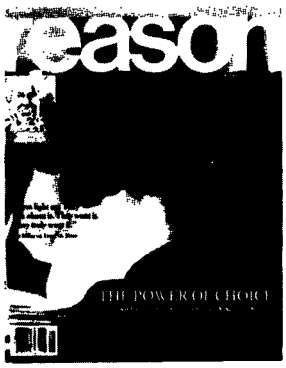

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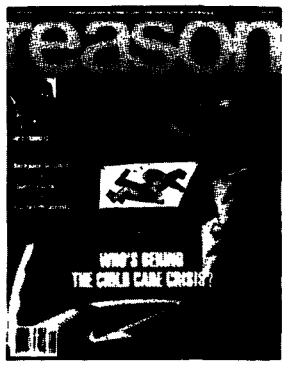

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Not so. Nursery school, which is wonderful for little children, is the exception. Otherwise, compared to my cheap home care, outside care was worse, despite the price.

I was unable to make sense of Miss Endig's next statement for a long time. Did she mean that the free market is unfair *because* I was able to find care for $5,000 a year or did she mean that for $5,000 a year, no wonder I had trouble finding care? Either way, she missed my point.

If she means that the free market is unfair because I was able to find good care at $100 a week, I will say that parents pay what they can. I went into great detail about my efforts to find reliable, good care in the official system, even though it would have cost far more. As I itemized in my article, official care for three children by centers, family day care, live-out baby-sitting, or nannies would have cost us between $14,000 and $22,000 a year, or from 90 percent to 140 percent of our disposable income after fixed expenses like housing and taxes.

And even were parents able to pay what Miss Endig may think they should, they must first find the care. In my area, even parents who are able to pay $175-$350 a week for care for a single child must put themselves on long waiting lists for nannies and day-care slots. Should I have refused the willing offer of help that left us enough money to eat when the more expensive help was unobtainable anyway?

The irony of my situation was that, in the end, it was the informal free market, not the licensed, official child-care system, which served us beautifully. With children of different needs and ages—in other words, with a normal family—what we needed was warm, flexible in-home care. And that was not the most difficult or most expensive to get, but the cheapest and easiest. The year after my third child was born, thirty people applied for the job. The price we paid was accepted willingly and the care provided was excellent. Only the spiteful would cavil at such a happy ending.

I thank Holly Zimmerman for her thoughtful letter. I appreciated hearing from a day-care provider with very different experiences.

Miss Zimmerman says I do not make a consistent, reasoned case against regulation. I disagree. My experience and research have taught me that some regulation of the field *is* reasonable but some is not. It is also important to distinguish between *any* regulation and the particular strictures in ABC.

ABC is the worst possible way to regulate and subsidize day-care centers because *any* direct federal funding of day care raises the church-state problem, because the bill requires clumsy contracts with providers instead of vouchers or direct aid to parents, and because the interest groups behind the bill are hostile to private centers in general.

But ABC is even worse when it comes to family day care, which is still the most common arrangement, and 94 percent of which is informal and unlicensed. Here, regulation tends to shrink supply and raise prices by discouraging casual care such as young mothers taking in a few children or a cousin lending a hand. A study in Sweden showed that once regulations were vigorously enforced, family care cost so much more than center care that the supply dried up. The best study of family day care, which compared informal and licensed care, found that informal care was somewhat cheaper and averaged fewer children, while the quality was the same.

I think it important to emphasize, however, that all child care *is* badly paid, relative to the work and skill involved. I would certainly like to see caregivers paid professional salaries, but political distortion of the market through restrictive regulations like ABC, is not the way to do it.

I do not think Holly Zimmerman or other such providers are "greedy." The problem is systemic: severe economic pressure on young families makes them need care badly while having little left with which to buy it. I do not object to (though I may bemoan) shortages of the kind created by the market. I object to regulation that prevents both provider and parent from working around such constraints.

The day-care lobby, which largely represents nonprofit, subsidized center care, *is* greedy. Instead of intelligently addressing the true causes of its truly low pay, it has promulgated an exceptionally bad bill to disable permanently a national market that, overall, can still provide an adequate supply of good, if informal, child care at a reasonable price.

South Africa

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In his somewhat honest, somewhat fair review of my book, *Prisoners of a Dream: The South African Mirage* [Books in Review, December 1989], Richard John Neuhaus says I might have been more persuasive had I dealt with the arguments for "measured hope," a criticism I find hard to make sense of. The mastering theme of *Prisoners* is that there is real but limited change going on in South Africa, and that change means limits. Pastor Neuhaus thinks that South Africa could have a one-man, one-vote system nationally and survive as a country with the rule of law, or as he has recently written: "The end that must be pursued, I believe, is majority rule achieved with a minimum of bloodshed and suffering, resulting in a more democratic, rather than less democratic regime. . . ." I think these words show what Pastor Neuhaus means by "measured hope": a sentimental wish for the impossible, for unlimited change, which would bring a totalitarian government to the only country in Africa that is a democracy—with a limited franchise. For at least a year now "ending apartheid" has turned into a code word everywhere for "one man, one vote," the cry of the African National Congress (ANC). Wittingly or unwittingly, Pastor Neuhaus backs this position in his review. The demands for unlimited change on the part of the ANC and its fronts and the South African Communist party (SACP) hinder the possible. My whole book is a plea for the feasible, an argument that the feasible and the limited demand more courage than the unlimited and impossible.

As for Jonas Savimbi, I call, and think, him a great man but at the same time I am deeply critical of him. Does Pastor Neuhaus really think greatness comes unblemished?

Pastor Neuhaus also says I indulge in a style of anti-Communism that only makes matters worse because it plays into the hands of anti-anti-Communists. In plain English he means I am an anti-Communist fanatic. By fanatical anti-Communism he means I have dared to call Communism evil. He describes my account of the Denton Hearings, somewhat condescendingly, as "an abbreviated transcript interwoven with run-

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ning editorial comment on the evils of Communism." But he also understands that I wrote what I did because the evidence at the hearing struck me at my deepest. The reviewer of *Prisoners* in the *Neue Zuercher Zeitung* got closer to the truth when he said that the suppression of evidence, more or less in the entire West, about cruelty, murder, and terror within the ANC, SACP, and in the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO), now taking over Namibia, was as evil as the acts themselves. In his book *Dispensations* a few years ago, Pastor Neuhaus dismissed the Denton Hearings; in his review of my book he writes, "They speak with a compelling urgency that must not be ignored."

Not ignoring the Denton Hearings means remembering that most South Africans, both black and white, do not want an ANC-SACP regime. . . . Archbishop Mzilikaze Masiya, the president of the Council of Apostolic and Zion Churches in South Africa (churches that draw three to four million at their Easter services), has said: ". . . The silent majority of blacks in South Africa does not support the ANC comrades who try to silence any opposition by violent means, by 'necklacing' their own people, by forcing them to drink detergent should they not obey consumer boycotts, by shouting Marxist slogans, and by carrying the Red flag. Blacks who oppose revolution don't have to be afraid."

LEO RADITSA
St. John's College
Annapolis, Maryland

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS writes:

Leo Raditsa says that I believe that "South Africa could have a one-man, one-vote system nationally and survive as a country with the rule of law." What I believe is more accurately represented in the words of mine that he quotes, and more fully elaborated in my book, *Dispensations: The Future of South Africa as South Africans See It.* "Majority rule" can take many forms, a number of which, one hopes, will soon be the subject of negotiations among South Africans of all groups. I do not think I "dismissed" the Denton Hearings in my book, but it is true that Mr. Raditsa's book gave me a fuller appreciation of the value of those hearings.

Sharon

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Eliot A. Cohen's review of Ariel Sharon's autobiography, *Warrior* [Books in Review, December 1989], is, I think, a fair evaluation of the book itself. His appraisal of the author is another matter.

Mr. Cohen recounts without disapproval the numerous accomplishments of General Sharon's military career but then dismisses Sharon's performance in the Yom Kippur War as only controversial behavior that "brought him close to court-martial." That it also happened to be imaginative behavior which snatched victory from the Egyptian army's grasp, while Moshe Dayan and the other generals could not decide how to recoup Israel's setbacks, goes unmentioned. The Yom Kippur War may have been a political disaster for Israel, but it would be appropriate now and then for someone to acknowledge that Sharon and his maverick behavior played a most important part in preventing it from being a military catastrophe as well.

I share Mr. Cohen's hope that the hour of catastrophe not arrive for Israel, but not for the reason he gives: that it might offer the possibility of Sharon's becoming Prime Minister. Does Mr. Cohen think Sharon's "cold intelligence" should not be called "wisdom"? Then, pray tell, how does he define that quality? And, as the Book of Job asks, where shall it be found? In Israel's current leadership that sits paralyzed, with no strategy of its own, waiting to see what will happen next? In the no-annexation, no-withdrawal policies of previous governments which, instead of making the West Bank and Gaza a part of Israel, held those areas in trust for the Palestinian Arabs, thus creating a permanent temptation to establish the very Palestinian state Israel professes to see as a mortal danger?

Sharon has made his share of mistakes, as has everyone else who aspires to lead Israel or has led it in the past. Still, Mr. Cohen felt compelled to enumerate quite a few examples of the correctness of his judgments. If Sharon's "cold intelligence" isn't wisdom, it has to be the next best thing.

OSCAR WALD
Chicago, Illinois

ELIOT A. COHEN writes:

I do not understand why Oscar Wald fails to see a distinction between intelligence and wisdom, for there is such a thing as being too clever by half—as Sharon was in his conception of Operation Peace for Galilee, or in his support of the removal of the Hashemites from power in Jordan. As for the Yom Kippur War, I refer Mr. Wald to Avraham Adan's memoir, among others. It was not Sharon's decision to cross the Canal—Golda Meir and David Elazar deserve much of the credit for that, and his division did not do all of the fighting, as Adan vividly recounts. Hero worship is a dangerous thing, particularly when the hero has flaws on the same scale as his virtues.

Correction

Robert Alter's article, "Interpreting the Bible" [March], contains a reference to "the late" H.L. Ginsberg. We are happy to note that the reference was mistaken, and we extend our apologies to Professor Ginsberg.—ED.

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The Case for More Immigration

Ben J. Wattenberg and Karl Zinsmeister

For the first time in a quarter-century, and only the fourth in our entire history, Congress is attempting a comprehensive update of our immigration laws. The Senate has already passed a bill and the House of Representatives is now deliberating on a version of its own. If, in concurrence with the President, they produce legislation, it could be the most important action taken by our government in this decade. It would not only change the blend of the American clay, it would significantly influence any number of powerful issues, from competitiveness to national purpose. Immigration policy, in short, critically affects the relative position and prosperity of the United States, both domestically and on the international scene.

I

The first thing to be said about current immigrant flows to this country is that in historical terms they are fairly moderate. While the actual number of foreign citizens now entering the U.S. may seem high—about 650,000 per year, counting legals, illegals, and refugees, and subtracting out-migration—it amounts all in all to an annual increase in the population of only about one-fifth of 1 percent. At the turn of the century, by contrast, when immigration was at its height, it increased the U.S. population by about 1 percent per year. Furthermore, the fraction of our current population that is foreign-born is not only well below earlier U.S. peaks, it is lower than the present levels in several West European nations, and considerably below the proportions in other immigrant nations like Australia and Canada.

The extent of *illegal* immigration to the U.S. seems particularly subject to exaggeration. In early 1986, the U.S. Bureau of the Census, in its first official estimate, concluded that there were about two million undocumented aliens in the country as of 1980, and that approximately another 200,000 had entered each year thereafter. This figure was much lower than the ones trumpeted by many alarmists. (The Census Bureau also concluded during the 1980's that about 160,000 persons, most of them foreign-born, emigrated from the U.S. every year.) And today there appear to be at least somewhat fewer illegals arriving than in the past. Since passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has reported a significant reduction in the number of persons caught illegally crossing U.S. borders, with the 1989 figures falling 54 percent below the 1986 totals.

This does not mean that illegal immigration is not a problem, or that strict measures may not need to be implemented to deal with it, ranging from forgery-resistant Social Security cards to more border guards. But the point is that even with illegals taken into account, the numbers of people now entering the country are not distressingly high. In fact, they are lower than what, in our judgment, a wise policy would dictate.

II

Before considering what such a policy might look like, however, we need to attend to the arguments *against* substantial further immigration to this country.

The most widespread such argument is that America already has enough people, or too many people, or will soon have too many people unless the flow of new residents is stopped.

Yet according to medium-variant ("most likely") projections by the Census Bureau, at current levels of birth, mortality, and immigration, the U.S. over the next fifty years will experience relatively slow population growth, then slower growth, then no growth, and then decline. This is due primarily to the fact that, for fifteen years now, fertility rates have been below the replacement level. Even an immigration moderately higher than the current level would still leave us on a slow-growth path toward population stability in the next century.

The future can, of course, change. Suffice it to say that under current conditions there is no long-term population explosion under way in this country. Claims that immigration is going to

Ben J. Wattenberg is a senior fellow, and Karl Zinsmeister is an adjunct fellow, at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. An earlier version of the present essay was delivered as a discussion paper at the AEI annual policy conference in December 1989.

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bring about a standing-room-only America, or anything close to it, are bunk.

Beyond that, the risks and benefits of our current demographic trends are open to debate. Though much attention has been paid to the dangers of overpopulation and overimmigration, little notice has been directed to the dangers of stasis or decline. Over the last two centuries, America's prosperity and growing influence have coincided with the most significant long-term population boom in history. In the century to come the population of the planet as a whole will double; is it wise for America to be a no-growth player in a high-growth world?

A SECOND, related argument against immigration focuses on potential damage to the environment. Former Colorado Governor Richard Lamm put the view clearly:

> With current levels of immigration, we will always be forced to use our resources at a faster and faster rate, to try to expand our economy to make room for more and more workers, to try to spread our suburbs, cutting down the forests and clearing out the farms that used to surround our cities.

The biologist Garrett Hardin recently blamed immigration for the fact that "Traffic problems are being replaced by rush-hour gridlock. Safe drinking water is scarcer every year. Forests are being killed by acid rain."

Statements like these are flawed in many respects. To begin with the issue of resource depletion, the truth is that regardless of the level of population, we have always been and will always be "running out" of resources, but we will never hit empty. Under any intelligent market-based system, resource use is not a matter of draining down inherited reserves but a complex process of inherent rationing, constantly evolving new applications, and substitutions based on what makes economic sense plus what is feasible with contemporary technology. Among the once-dwindling resources that are now in "oversupply" are flint for arrowheads, farmland, acetylene for lamps, high-quality vacuum tubes, latex for rubber-making, trees usable for schooner masts, good mules, and copper ore. Moreover, as the economist Julian Simon has noted, the real costs of nearly all natural resources—measured in hours of human labor needed to acquire one unit—have fallen steadily and sharply in recent decades.

Similarly, ecological degradation is caused in large measure by what people do or fail to do, not by how many people there are. Within the last two decades, since America began spending significant sums on abatement, pollution has declined even as population has gone up. Recent concern about environmental trends like carbon-dioxide build-up and alleged ozone depletion are particularly irrelevant to the immigration question. If, as some worry, an individual person adds to global warming, it does not matter whether that person is in South Korea or New York (unless it is beneficial for Third Worlders to stay poor, thereby using less energy).

As for the perceived crowding that so inflames environmentalists, much of it is an effect not of numbers *per se* but of living in a land of growing affluence. If American suburbs are expanding outward, if national parks are host to more and more visitors, if once-favorite beaches and vacation spots have been "discovered," all that is largely owing not to a surfeit of Americans but to the unprecedented amounts of discretionary earnings at their command. Disposable income per capita, adjusted for inflation, has gone up by about 50 percent in the last twenty years; in the same period, the number of second homes has doubled. We now have about one car per adult. More than twice as many Americans take vacations abroad today as did in 1970.

This can make for crowded airports and difficulty in finding a parking spot. By any decent standard, however, these are good things, a function of greater choice and opportunity for Americans of all classes. They are not a result of letting in too many immigrants.

A THIRD argument in opposition to immigration is that immigrants constitute a big drain on social spending.

A series of recent economic studies challenge this notion. Immigrants tend to be disproportionately young, and as a result they draw very lightly on Social Security and Medicare—by far our largest social programs. Nor do they draw much more than natives on other kinds of welfare spending, like Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps, and unemployment compensation. In all, immigrants actually consume smaller amounts of public funds than do natives for about their first dozen years in the U.S. After that, levels tend to equalize.

What is more, within eleven to sixteen years of coming to America the average immigrant is earning as much as, or more than, the average native-born worker. Immigrant *families*, who typically have more working members, outstrip native families in income in as little as three to five years. In this way, immigrants become above-average tax*payers*. Viewed strictly in terms of fiscal flows and social-welfare budgets, then, immigrants tend to represent a good deal for the nation.

A fourth argument directly contradicts the third: immigrants are such zealous workers that they deprive natives of scarce jobs. Here, too, major studies by the Urban Institute and by the Rand Corporation paint a different picture. Immigration to a given area can be quite compatible with job growth, and even with wage increases. Indeed, one finds little evidence of higher unemployment or of a serious depressive effect on wages even

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among the most vulnerable native groups—low-skill black workers or American-born Hispanics—when there is a rise in the proportion of immigrants in the local labor market.

Immigrants seem generally to complement rather than compete with native workers. They often fill manual or specialized jobs for which domestic workers are in short supply. They sometimes attract minimum-wage industries which would otherwise have located elsewhere. They stimulate activity in the service economy. They start new businesses. As anyone who has lived in a neighborhood with such businesses can attest, these enterprises are largely original: far from driving someone else from a job, many immigrant entrepreneurs carve a narrow foothold for themselves out of the rubble of empty buildings and unserved needs.

A fifth and final argument against immigration, perhaps the most venerable of all, is cultural: immigration on a large scale will eventually disrupt societal coherence, "swamp" the national culture, and imperil our sense of shared history and unity. Benjamin Franklin was an early articulator of this view; the targets of his ire were Germans, whom he criticized as clannish, ignorant, and intent on maintaining their own language. Since Franklin's time, the targets have varied—Irish, Italians, Jews, Hispanics, and others have each taken their turn—but the charges have remained remarkably consistent.

Yet, Benjamin Franklin and a host of other critics notwithstanding, the integration of immigrants into the national ethos has not proved notably difficult in the past. We did not develop a German-language province, or any other separate enclaves; new arrivals, certainly after a generation or two, have tended to disperse fairly broadly across the land. Immigrants have not succeeded in introducing monarchism into this country, or for that matter Bolshevism (to mention only two once-widespread fears). Our founding fathers, were they able to pay a visit, would find many of our basic social and political institutions rather familiar. American ethnic history has for the most part followed the wise old dictum, "In all things essential, unity, in other things diversity."

Now, it could be argued that this generally healthy pattern has changed somewhat over the last twenty-five years. American politics has increasingly come to be conducted in terms of what the sociologist Nathan Glazer has called "ethnic populism"—one bloc against another, with the national interest perceived as nothing more than an aggregate of group appeals. This has made many Americans defensive, and probably less charitable toward the idea of large immigrant flows with their implicit threat of Balkanization. Then, too, there is the changing makeup of those immigrant flows themselves. Increasing proportions come from Asia, Latin America, the Muslim world, the Caribbean, and Africa, places where historical, religious, racial, and political traditions are often quite different from those of the majority of Americans.

There is no ignoring the unsettled feeling many people experience upon walking into a New York City subway car or a Los Angeles public school—the feeling of being, as the saying goes, "in a Third World country." Mass public opinion in America has never been pro-immigration, and may be less so today as immigration from European nations has dwindled. That is understandable enough; within a properly tempered political system citizens should not be made to feel like strangers in their own land.

But there are many grounds for reassurance. Data from California, for instance, show that somewhere between a quarter and a third of all Hispanics marry "Anglos"; us-vs.-them politics becomes much harder to sustain when it is difficult to tell the sides apart. Moreover, the powerful forces of Americanization are far from dead. More than 90 percent of U.S.-born Hispanics are now entirely fluent in English, and more than half of that group speaks *only* English. Young Hispanics aged twenty-one to twenty-five who are either native-born or have been in the country for more than ten years have reading scores comparable to the all-U.S. average.

Continued emphasis on English-language proficiency and other essentials of the collective American identity is obviously wholly desirable, not only from the perspective of the larger American interest but from the point of view of immigrants anxious to make progress in society. Militant advocates of linguistic and cultural separatism are, as it happens, out of step with the actual practices of most immigrants. It is in fact newcomers who often have the most powerful interest in the creation of common cultural ground—one reason Spanish is not going to become California's co-official language is that new Californians from Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, the USSR, India, and Cambodia would not stand for it.

When it comes, finally, to a sense of shared national values, in the United States this has almost never been based on common blood but rather on specific traits and attitudes, both real and idealized. And the simple fact is that those traits and attitudes—self-reliance, a disciplined work ethic, strong family attachments, religiosity, an inclination toward entrepreneurship, a stress on education, independence of mind, an appreciation of individual liberty—are often notably prominent among immigrants to this country. It is no accident: in some large measure, after all, they come to America because they admire what America stands for.

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International pollsters tell us that Americans are more patriotic, more willing to fight and die for their nation, and prouder of their heritage than residents of other industrial countries, even the most homogeneous ones. Our common ground derives from the surpassing power of deeply held principle. The democratic and individualistic values associated with that principle have proved and continue to prove assimilable by immigrants.

III

These, then, are some of the reasons why we need not fear additional immigration to the United States. Beyond these, there are other reasons why, especially in the period just ahead, we should positively welcome it.

In a normal labor market new people not only "consume" jobs, they also "create" jobs through their labor and their buying. That is usually justification enough for not being overly concerned about "job-stealing." But the United States is not at present experiencing a normal labor market. The unemployment rate stands not much above 5 percent (which is near "full employment"), and the supply of young workers is shrinking (due to earlier depressed fertility).

Many, though not all, economists believe we may be entering an era of long-term labor deficit. Business cycles may rise and fall, they maintain, but the long-term trend will probably be one of too few qualified workers for the positions available. From mid-1985 to 1990, eleven million new jobs opened up while the total working-age population grew by only five million. If that squeezing trend continues, it will become harder and harder for employers to fill positions.

In some areas, grave labor shortages have already surfaced, and not just at entry levels. As once-young workers get older and low-fertility cohorts become a more significant part of the workforce, recruitment problems are shifting upward in the employment chain. Nationwide surveys find that one of the biggest problems facing American companies today is hiring and retaining employees.

A future of more jobs than workers may sound like a happy circumstance, but it reflects imbalances for which there can also be penalties. One such penalty is deteriorating service, and an increase in underqualified, rude, and weakly committed employees. Another is the cancellation of expansion plans for many businesses. Still another may be the advent of wage inflation, which could damage not only the U.S. but also other nations in both the Western and developing worlds.

Many of these dislocations could be avoided by immigration, a superb smoother of economic and demographic swings. Immigrants flow not to areas of labor surplus but to the regions and the occupations where demand is greatest. In this way they serve as a natural shock absorber in the U.S. labor market.

The most immediate beneficiaries of immigrant enterprise, moreover, are often the very individuals who are assumed to be their competitors—the poor. Ghetto stores are perhaps the clearest example. In vast stretches of low-income inner cities all across America, the most striking fact of life, aside from the staggering crime incidence, is the underprovision of basic services. In Washington, D.C., for instance, in the large poor neighborhood east of the Anacostia River, home to a significant portion of the city's population, there are only a handful of decent sit-down restaurants and grocery stores. Block after block passes unpunctuated by commerical operations. To obtain even the simplest of goods and services often requires a long bus ride.

The absence of provisioners is not conspiratorial, but "rational." With the harassments of crime and the low spending habits of the residents, only long hours of unpleasant work can make inner-city businesses succeed. And in Anacostia, as in many other places, it is largely immigrants who are opening establishments in the commerical desert. It is easy to downplay the significance of their contribution, and their motive is not altruism. But for residents who can buy milk and newspapers and hay-fever pills at 2 A.M. where before there was nothing, they make a significant addition to the quality of life.

Beyond a strong dose of the enterprising spirit, immigrants typically bring something else to the country, and that is their youth. The United States is in the midst of becoming a significantly grayer nation. Census Bureau projections show median age rising from thirty-three to forty-two over the next forty years. Just from 1990 to 2000, the number of young adults aged twenty-five to thirty-four is expected to drop from 44 million to 37 million. The ratio of working-age taxpayers to elderly people will shrink from the 5:1 of today to 2.5:1 in 2030.

The cultural effects of such a demographic shift are uncertain, although anyone who has recently visited Vienna or Stockholm will have noticed the very different quality of a society in which one out of five, one out of four, one out of three citizens is over age sixty-five. Less uncertain are the economic effects. Social Security and Medicare have become the largest single component of the federal budget, and one of the most important elements of U.S. macroeconomic policy generally. Because the generation born roughly since the late 1960's is so thin compared to its predecessor, the Social Security system faces some painful readjustments in coming decades as the baby-boom generation reaches retirement age. And the decline in the ratio of prime-age workers to retirees is being further compounded by spiraling health-care expenses,

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coupled with the inexorable lengthening of life spans. As a result, we face a future of more taxes, fewer benefits, or both.

Restoring some demographic equilibrium to the system by more nearly balancing the number of workers and retirees would lessen the need for tax increases or benefit reductions for many decades. While new pro-natal tax policies would be very useful, changing native birth rates is difficult, and there is a long lag between the arrival of the extra child and his entry into the productive workforce. Immigration, however, can begin to ameliorate these imbalances fairly quickly. Each payroll-taxpaying immigrant adds thousands of dollars per year to the Social Security trust funds.

Of course, immigrants provide our society and economy with other, more ineffable, benefits than these. It is often said, for example, that America's future depends on our ability to cultivate strengths and bolster weaknesses in an increasingly competitive global arena. Even though current immigration policies give inadequate consideration to occupational qualifications—a subject to which we will return—the U.S. still gets more than 11,000 engineers, scientists, and computer specialists per year. We also get future practitioners of these professions; of the 40 finalists in the 1988 Westinghouse high-school science competition, 22 were foreign-born or children of foreign-born parents: from Taiwan, China, Korea, India, Guyana, Poland, Trinidad, Canada, Peru, Iran, Vietnam, and Honduras. In Boston, 13 of the 17 public-high-school valedictorians in the class of 1989 were foreign-born. Researchers at San Diego State University report that "immigrants and refugees to the U.S.—whether from Asia, Europe, or Latin America—are systematically outperforming all native-born American students in grade-point averages despite . . . English-language handicaps." Beyond the specific contributions made by such people, we may also consider the salutary shock effect their presence in our schools could have on young native-born Americans.

Immigration, then, can bring us significant numbers of bold creators and skilled workers. It can diminish whatever labor shortages may be coming our way. Immigration can keep America from aging precipitously and fill in the demographic holes that may harm our pension and health-care systems. Immigration can energize whole communities with a new entrepreneurial spirit, keeping us robust and growing as a nation. At a time when the idea of competitiveness has become a national fixation, it can bolster our competitiveness and help us retain our position as the common denominator of the international trade web. And as most Americans continue to believe that we have a mission to foster liberty and the love of liberty throughout the world, immigration can help us fulfill that mission through successful example.

IV

None of this means that Americans lack the right to define the membership of their nation. Of course they do. Nor is every immigrant a bonus, as witness the castoffs from Cuba's jails and asylums, the nearly 10,000 aliens now serving time in federal prisons, and the 50,000 more who have committed crimes but have been released or sentenced to probation.

It is clear enough that recent policies have not always produced the optimal immigrant stream. Deportation of undesirable individuals could be greatly speeded, and careful selection of future citizens is well within national prerogatives. American immigration, after all, is one of the world's great buyer's markets—many fine candidates are lined up for each spot—and we need only specify more carefully what we are looking for.

Unfortunately, the incentives in current laws not only make for an inefficient system, but they often cut against our interests.

Since 1965, when the system was overhauled to end forty years of quotas that were unfair to residents of many countries outside Western and Northern Europe, our criteria for accepting immigrants have more and more boiled down to family connections—what has been called the nepotism standard. Nearly 90 percent of all non-refugee immigrants now come to the U.S. in the name of "family unification," a category which carries no skills or educational requirements. That has tended to give a big advantage to residents of a handful of Asian and Latin American countries where extended kinship ties are strong. (Two-thirds of all immigrants come from the following fifteen countries, and one-third from the first four alone: Mexico, the Philippines, Haiti, Korea, China, the Dominican Republic, India, Vietnam, Jamaica, Cuba, Iran, the United Kingdom, El Salvador, Canada, and Laos.) The nepotism standard has left little room for immigrants valued on other grounds. Today, only about 5 percent of immigrant visas go to persons qualifying specifically on occupational merit.

Yet there is no good reason why our immigration laws should fail to serve our social and industrial needs. In perhaps overly romantic homage to our notion of America as an open sanctuary for the world's huddled masses, we have been strangely reluctant to design immigration policy in order to maximize the contribution it might make to our economy and society. There is no basis for such reluctance, especially in light of the fact that over the years we have consistently taken in more refugees and immigrants than all other nations combined. Without eliminating the humanitarian thrust of our current policy, without cutting down (indeed, while probably widening) existing immigrant streams, we can substantially increase our total acceptance of immigrants and

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allot a good portion of the available slots with both eyes squarely on the national interest.

The economist Barry Chiswick has produced a useful plan for the reform of our visa preferences, and the proposals that follow build upon the program he has sketched in *Regulation* magazine.

As under current policy, we propose that refugee visas be allotted independently, and adult citizens of the United States be able to bring in any bona-fide spouses, minor children, or parents without limit (but not more distant relatives, who would be judged under meritocratic criteria). These two categories together—refugees and immediate family—would make up a little more than half of the yearly total of immigrants to the United States. All other entrants would be selected through a skill-based system, with points awarded for years of school completed, apprenticeship or vocational training, knowledge of English, high professional status or special educational achievements, and some carefully drawn blueprint of occupational demand in the U.S. Extra points could be given if a spouse also had scoreable skills, and as a continuing partial boost to extended family members, the presence of relatives in the U.S. willing to guarantee financial support could also count in an applicant's favor. Entrepreneurial talents and willingness to invest capital would be recognized, and extra points would be granted to young workers.

At the end of each year's scoring process, the available entrance slots would be filled simply by accepting, in order, the top scorers on the list. This is similar to the way Canada, Australia, and New Zealand already select most of their immigrants, with a great deal of success. It is a fair, rational alternative to the unjust, helter-skelter preferences now in place, and it would open up immigration channels to a much wider range of applicants across a broader spectrum of countries.

Moving to a more merit-based system would quickly increase the average qualifications of new arrivals to the U.S. That in turn would produce favorable ripples throughout our labor force, within our universities and laboratories, and all across American society. One example: the educational profile of current U.S. immigrants is exaggerated at both the top and the bottom—the fraction of recent immigrants who have a college degree is significantly higher than among the U.S. population as a whole, but so is the proportion with grade-school-only educations. A point system would enlarge the number of highly educated immigrants even further, and somewhat reduce the number of lightly educated ones.

This is appropriate. Chiswick points out that recent adult male Mexican immigrants have arrived with an average of 7.5 years of total schooling. Unskilled, weakly educated immigrants may earn much more here than they could in their countries of origin, and so find themselves personally better off, and they also can make valuable economic contributions—from maids, busboys, and gardeners, up the occupational ladder as far as aspiration and ability allow. But they do little to improve immediately the overall competence of the American workforce. Under the system proposed here, there would continue to be ample room for such hard-working but undereducated immigrants. It is very unlikely, however, that a seventh-grade education would continue to be an *average* level of achievement.

Another advantage would flow from the fact that most immigrants have already had their educations completed elsewhere. In terms of the costs of schooling alone, even the relatively small number of professional and technical-occupation immigrants we currently accept are worth an estimated several billion dollars annually. Raising the average educational level of future immigrant cohorts would swell this figure dramatically.

Large benefits would also accrue every time we attracted an immigrant with proven financial skills and capital. The payoff is double: we gain the nest egg and, even more important in the long run, the talent. America does not nationalize investments, but investors frequently nationalize themselves (as it were). This tendency might be encouraged. In Canada a program to bring in venture capitalists has been in place for ten years, providing Business Immigrant visas to individuals willing to sink at least the equivalent of about a quarter of a million U.S. dollars in a new enterprise. In 1988, according to Canada's Employment and Immigration Office, 3,258 foreign-born entrepreneurs pumped nearly $2 billion into such new enterprises, creating an estimated 15,000 jobs.

V

It is a sign of progress that Congress has taken at least some short steps in the direction of more meritocratic criteria in the immigration bills now under consideration. In something of a breakthrough, the new Kennedy-Simpson legislation passed by the Senate sets up a scoring system to allot a substantially higher number of visas (to a total of 150,000 per year) to people who possess special skills or hold doctorates. Among other changes, it also earmarks 4,800 visas for people who bring at least $1 million and create ten jobs upon their arrival, and 2,000 slots for immigrants who bring $500,000 and promise to invest in a depressed area.

Yet even while these modest efforts have been mounted, non-merit-tested visas for non-immediate family members continue to be a big part of the system. In particular, an amendment to the Senate legislation sponsored by Senators Hatch and DeConcini guarantees a special quota of 216,000 annual entrance permits, to be distributed outside any point system or merit test to non-immediate relatives like siblings, nieces, nephews

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of U.S. citizens as well as to relatives of permanent resident aliens. This very unsound proposal would tend to block further movement toward a more balanced mix of criteria for immigrant selection.

Still, the Senate has established the beginnings of a better system—and somewhat increased the total number of expected immigrants. Equally important, the Congress as a whole has made some small progress toward addressing the problem of European immigration. The 1965 immigration reform had the effect of unfairly curtailing European entrants to 10 percent of the total incoming flow. Yet ours is a heavily European nation, and so long as our immigration policies leave hardly any room for arrivals from the original sources of our culture, those policies will lack broad support.

This is an especially appropriate moment to increase sharply our acceptance of East European and Soviet immigrants. By adding a new program of Liberty Visas we could provide 150,000 legal slots annually to people who for decades have been doubly impeded by Communist governments that would not let them out and now by an America that does not let them in because they have no family connections. But demand also exists in Western Europe, particularly in Great Britain and Ireland but also in Germany, Spain, Greece, and elsewhere. A bias of twenty-five years' standing could be ended by making available a special allotment of 75,000 legal slots annually for immigrants from democratic Europe. Both of these programs would be designed to terminate after ten years. By then, a stream of European entrants (many of them skilled and highly educated) would have been established, representing somewhere around 25 to 35 percent of our new arrivals, a fairer and much more balanced figure than present ratios.

Although wildly varying numbers have been floated, basically what the proposed Senate bill seems to establish is a system which, while moving toward a merit-based selection process, adds only a modest number to the total of new immigrants. The proposal of Congressman Bruce Morrison (D.-Conn.), chairman of the House subcommittee dealing with immigration, adds more, but without an individual-merit point system. The proposal sketched here would yield an overall increase of 250,000—probably somewhat more than Morrison—with a merit system.

VI

We have long since passed the point when we could hope to be a nation in the tribal sense. We are ethnically, religiously, and racially diverse. This does not always make for easy relations, but there is no changing it. Moreover, there are compensations for our diversity in the form of our unmatched dynamism and our capacity for successful synthesis. Adaptability is our strong suit, something we are better at than any other people. This is in some significant measure thanks to our immigrant tradition. Our most recent immigrants have made America the first truly universal nation in history. We now come from everywhere.

Our many generations of working pluralism, derived in such large measure from broad immigration, have demonstrated the effectiveness of free values to peoples from all corners of the globe. That an increasingly integrated world more and more lives by our own code is no accident. To a great extent the shift toward universal liberty has been inspired by hard-earned, sometimes painful, but ultimately triumphant day-to-day American practice.

Americans are properly proud of this historical role, and politicians or political parties that have failed to take it into account have suffered for their lack of understanding. Americans believe they seek not just prosperity for themselves but the fulfillment of a national purpose. Wisely designed immigration policies can help in pursuing that national purpose.

But our immigration policies ought not be conceived as some kind of messianic international public service. From our inclusionism we reap rich fruits, bolstering our numbers, enhancing our competitiveness, increasing our influence. A nation like ours functions best when confident, welcoming progress and growth, and demonstrating a willingness to absorb the lessons of outsiders. It wounds itself when it turns inward—excluding foreigners, protecting its markets, resisting fresh ideas and infusions. We would dilute both our own prosperity and our reason for being were we to fail to extend, and widen, our gangplank to the world.

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Can the Palestinians Make Peace?

Daniel Pipes

In November 1917, Britain's Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour made public the dramatic announcement that "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people." But he then added a major stipulation: ". . . it being understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine."

London's easy assumption of 1917 that the two parts of Balfour's declaration could be reconciled was quickly shattered, as the Arabs of Palestine showed that they very much considered Zionism an impediment to their "civil and religious rights." To their distress, British authorities found over the next thirty years that they could support the Jewish homeland or an Arab-dominated Palestine, but not both. Indeed, nothing in the vast reaches of their empire had prepared British administrators for such a bleakly zero-sum confrontation. In the end, they gave up on it; in 1947, in a unique instance of imperial defeatism, they handed the problem over to the United Nations.

This history comes to mind because the Bush administration today seems to be falling into almost the same pitfall. In a key speech delivered in May 1989, laying out the American position on what is optimistically called the Arab-Israeli "peace process," Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d called for

> self-government for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in a manner acceptable to Palestinians, Israel, and Jordan. Such a formula provides ample scope for Palestinians to achieve their full political rights. It also provides ample protection for Israel's security.

These sentences bear uncanny, if obverse, resemblances to the facile balancing of the Balfour Declaration. To begin with, where Balfour called for a Jewish "national home," Baker calls for "self-government for Palestinians." In the highly structured language of diplomacy, both are nonstandard phrases, as ambiguous as they are vague. Both suggest a less than fully sovereign political unit without spelling out what that might be. Then, too, in another parallel, where Balfour stipulated that Arab "civil and religious rights" not be harmed, Baker insists on protection for Israel's security interests. In effect, Baker has offered the Palestinians the same deal that Balfour offered the Zionists in 1917.

As the bitter legacy of the Balfour Declaration makes clear, however, a self-contradictory solution like this only raises hopes on one side and fears on the other. And there is another problem. The U.S. government opposes both permanent control by Israel of the occupied territories and an independent Palestinian state. What does that leave? Something called a "Palestinian entity."* No one knows just exactly what such an entity would look like, but here are some of the conditions that Ze'ev Schiff, a leading Israeli military analyst, requires:

> The Palestinian entity would be prohibited from entering into any military alliance or from permitting the stationing, transit, or training of foreign military or police forces on its territory. This ban would extend to foreign military advisers and trainers. . . .
>
> No troops, weapon systems (such as tanks, missiles, artillery, military aircraft, or electronic warfare), military fortifications or electronic sensors (such as missile-target-acquisition systems) would be permitted inside the Palestinian entity.

The Palestinian answer to these ideas has not been encouraging, to say the least. As a prominent Palestinian intellectual, Walid Khalidi, observed in 1978: "A demilitarized state would be self-defeating. Without national armed forces the political leadership of the state would become the laughingstock of the Arab world." More recently, the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Yasir Arafat, said he would accept such limits only if they applied in exactly the same measure to Israel.

Further, in a world order of sovereign states, it is not obvious that a "Palestinian entity" would last long. The dynamics of nationalism ensure

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* Few who use this term in English are aware that it is a translation of the Arabic term *al-kiyan al-Filastini* and that it implies the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

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that this eccentric unit would either become sovereign in its own right or fall under the domination of an existing state (Israel, Jordan, or Syria). In other words, foreign control or a sovereign Palestinian state are the only two realistic options. In trying to split the difference, just as the British did in 1917, Washington is bound to promote not peace but continuing conflict.

Nor is this the only thing wrong with the American government's approach. There is also the quite inexplicable overemphasis placed on Arabs and Israelis at this time of quiescence in the Middle East and of exceptional activity elsewhere in the world. The year 1989 saw revolutions in six East European countries; the likely reordering of the entire postwar security system in Europe; the first major changes in the Soviet system in thirty-five years; the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; trauma in China; and the emergence of Japan as a true world actor. But where was the American Secretary of State's attention fixed during most of that year? According to Daniel Kurtzer, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in charge of Arab-Israeli affairs, James Baker was "in almost daily telephone contact" with the Middle East.

It is also troubling to witness what seems to be an a priori assumption in Washington that Arafat's declaration of December 1988, in which he grudgingly recognized Israel and renounced terrorism, signified a long-term change in the stand of the PLO, and was not just tactical. Yet the inflamed rhetoric and violent activities of the PLO since that declaration was made would seem both to undercut Arafat's claim to a new policy and to confirm that, once again, the PLO is more concerned with organizational survival than with making peace.

A final concern is yet more far-reaching. It has to do with the assumption in Washington that the Arab-Israeli conflict can be resolved by addressing the Palestinian issue. Yet this emphasis on the Palestinians (an outlook which I call "Palestinianism") has two important flaws: in the first place, even if the Palestinians were to be satisfied, they are too weak to call off the Arab war against Israel; and in any case, available evidence suggests they cannot be satisfied by any solution short of the destruction of Israel.

In decades past, Israelis (and their supporters) interpreted their struggle with the Arabs as an international conflict between states. For their part, Arabs (and their supporters) saw the struggle as a communal one between the Jews, or the Israelis, and the Palestinians. This difference operated on many levels. Israelis conceived of the battlefield as the whole of the Middle East; Arabs recognized only the unit of Palestine. Israelis aspired to live in peace with neighboring states; Arabs aimed to regain what they had lost in Palestine. Israelis saw the confrontation as primarily military; Arabs saw it as a human-rights issue. Israelis portrayed their country as a tiny sliver surrounded by huge expanses of Arab territory; Arabs pointed to Israel's seemingly inexorable spread into all of Mandatory Palestine. Nomenclature confirmed this difference: Israelis used terms like the "Arab-Israeli conflict"; Arabs spoke of the "Palestinian problem."

This once-lively controversy over how to define the struggle hardly exists anymore. Quietly, steadily, and almost without notice, Palestinianism has pushed the state conflict to the sidelines. As endless lopsided votes at the United Nations suggest, nearly every single government now sees the matter the Arab way. From all one can tell, so too does public opinion around the world. Closer to home, Middle East specialists in the United States have come overwhelmingly to embrace Palestinianism, a host of organizations and the media have followed suit, and now the executive branch is going in the same direction. So far has this opinion advanced that the Arab states are regarded as mere adjuncts to the conflict, as proxies acting on the Palestinians' behalf.

More important yet, even many Israelis have come around to the Arab viewpoint. Most of Israel's Labor party today accepts Palestinianism. It is promoted by such eloquent spokesmen as Shulamit Aloni, Abba Eban, Amos Elon, Yehoshafat Harkabi, Mark Heller, Amos Oz, Matityahu Peled, Ze'ev Schiff, Ezer Weizman, and A. B. Yehoshua. The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, the International Center for Peace in the Middle East, the Israeli Human Rights Association, Peace Now, and the Ratz party all espouse this perspective as well.

The Israeli imprimatur has served to legitimate Palestinianism in the eyes of many American Jews, including such individuals as Rita Hauser, Philip Klutznick, and Anthony Lewis, and such organizations as the American Jewish Congress, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and the New Jewish Agenda.

To be sure, the notion that the state conflict counts most still has powerful supporters in the U.S., among them the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the Zionist Organization of America, and even the U.S. Congress, as well as the Likud party in Israel. Indeed, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir declared in late 1989 that "an understanding must first be reached with those Arab countries that are still in a state of war with us, because an arrangement with the Palestinians—which will not be accompanied by one with Arab states—will be useless." Yet even the Likud bastion is divided, with no less a figure than Foreign Minister Moshe Arens accepting a form of Palestinianism: "The problem most threatening to our existence," he recently said, "is the Palestinian issue. It is at the very heart of the country, near the population centers, and not somewhere in Iraq or even the Golan Heights." And in both Israel and the U.S., the proponents

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of the state perspective, though prominently placed, are nowadays on the defensive.

As Arens's statement suggests, Palestinianism flourishes because the Palestinians now dominate Arab activity vis-à-vis Israel, both violent and diplomatic. More generally, as Thomas L. Friedman of the New York *Times* writes, this is an era "when the Middle East intercountry conflict, with marching armies and rockets, has been at least temporarily replaced by an intercommunal conflict between Israelis and Palestinians with small arms and rocks." But how is it that the Palestinians, a small people without a state of their own, have all but managed to exclude the Arab states from the picture?

In large part, the explanation lies in the states themselves, which (except for Jordan) helped develop and then sponsored Palestinianism: they actually created the PLO in 1964 and nurtured it with money, arms, and diplomatic support. In part, it has to do with the string of Israeli military victories, which changed the Jewish state's image from that of a plucky and admired underdog into that of a great regional power. Credit too must go to the Palestinians themselves. Intellectuals articulated their case with such skill that it finally won a hearing; Yasir Arafat, for all his failings as a military leader, is a brilliant publicist and diplomat; and rock-throwers launched the *intifada* in December 1987.

As all this was going on, the Arab states, beset by their own difficulties, began to distance themselves from the Arab-Israeli conflict. The oil boom of the 1970's led inexorably to the oil bust of the 1980's, causing growth rates to flatten, military purchases to fall off, and political clout to diminish. The Iraq-Iran war preempted attention formerly paid to the struggle against Israel: it became clear that the latter was a luxury, probably one the states could no longer afford. Ideologically, the Arab regimes ran out of steam: anti-imperialism, anti-Zionism, and Arab socialism all faded, replaced by a greater sobriety and a harsher realism. Exuberant ambitions gave way to mordant introspection.

Accordingly, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan renounced its claim to the West Bank (temporarily, at least), and the Iraqi and Saudi authorities also found less reason to concern themselves with the conflict against Israel. But nowhere was the shift more apparent than in Egypt. For the first time since 1943, Cairo did not seek centrality in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Under Hosni Mubarak, the government's attention was (fortunately) directed toward eliminating state subsidies, building public works, keeping the birth rate down, and a host of other urgent domestic issues.

The Syrian government was somewhat different. While its hostility to Israel did not diminish, severe economic difficulties obstructed Hafez al-Assad's grandiose notions of strategic parity with Israel. Even Libya's Mu'ammar al-Qaddafi lost his punch, largely due to a failing economy. Qaddafi also appeared to have suffered a loss of nerve as a result of the U.S. raid on Tripoli in April 1986. Iran remained the one state fully engaged in the battle against Israel, but even there means hobbled intentions.

For all that Cairo, Amman, Damascus, and the other Arab capitals are for the moment distancing themselves from the conflict with Israel, however, they remain key to a settlement—far more so than the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Palestinian diaspora, or the leaders of the PLO. Further, the states still seek to control part or all of Palestine, even if they disguise this aspiration. The governments of Jordan, Syria, Libya, and Iran have highly elaborated views about the proper future for Palestine. Jordanian and Syrian ambitions are most evident; their leaders actually consider Palestine rightfully part of their patrimonies. The Libyan and Iranian governments overtly hope to place their agents in control.

Against all this, the PLO has little independent power. Yasir Arafat is more a media figure than a power broker; he cannot impose his will on a single state, with the possible exception of Kuwait (where Palestinians form approximately one-quarter of the population). Governments dispose of wealth, military force, political influence, and all the other instruments of state not available to Palestinians and on which the PLO depends.

Nor can Arafat control such Middle East ideologues as the fundamentalist Muslims (especially those in Lebanon) and the Pan-Arabists (whether Nasserist or Baathist). Indeed, he cannot even impose his will on the many Palestinian groups which reject his leadership. These divide into two types, the secularist organizations based in Damascus constituting the Palestine National Salvation Front; and the fundamentalist Muslims living mostly in Gaza where, according to some sources, they already outnumber PLO partisans.

Far from following Arafat's lead, rival Palestinian leaders persistently denounce and fight him. In a statement many Israelis would agree with, Abu Musa has called Arafat "a traitor, a cheat and a killer, a common criminal." George Habash has declared that "Yasir Arafat does not speak in the name of the masses of the Palestinian people." And Ahmad Jibril has likened Arafat to Pétain and threatened him with a death like Anwar Sadat's.

A hypothetical illustration brings home Arafat's weakness. Suppose, by some miracle, he and the Israelis came to a complete agreement on Palestinian self-government. What would change? Not much. Syrian missiles and Jordanian soldiers would remain in place, as would the cold peace with Egypt, while anti-Arafat elements of the PLO would continue to engage in terrorism. In contrast, suppose Hafez al-Assad signed a peace treaty with the Israelis. In that case, the interstate war would virtually end because Amman would im-

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mediately follow Damascus's example. Some of the Syrian-backed Palestinian groups would come to terms with Israel, as would Arafat. Even though Palestinian extremists would continue to riot, the conflict would become much less dangerous.

In sum, Arafat does not make the vital decisions of war and peace. The fighter planes in Syria, missiles in Iraq, and tanks in Egypt count more than the rocks on the West Bank. In some ways, the military dimension is even more critical than ever, what with the introduction of ever-more sophisticated armaments and the weakening hold of taboos (such as against the use of chemical weapons).

For all these reasons, it is a mistake to focus on the Palestinians. As Max Singer of the Potomac Institute points out, "For Israel to make peace with the Palestinians while the Arab war against Israel continues would be like making peace with a hand while the rest of the body is trying to kill you." Only when peace has been attained at the state level will it become possible to deal with Palestinian aspirations.

ASSUMING, that is, that it will ever be possible for Israel to satisfy these aspirations safely. For there is a second major problem with Palestinianism: it postulates a Palestinian willingness to compromise and to coexist with Israel.

This postulate flies in the face of abundant evidence that most Palestinians always have sought and still seek to destroy Israel. In his review of their attitudes from 1918 to 1948, Joseph Nevo uses the terms "monolithic and uncompromising" to describe Palestinian opposition to the Jews. Decades later, a 1980 survey of Palestinian students in Kuwait found 100 percent (!) refusing to recognize Israel's existence. A 1987 poll conducted in the West Bank and Gaza Strip found 78 percent of the population supporting "a democratic Palestinian state in all of Palestine," whereas only 17 percent accepted "a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip" (a ratio of almost 5 to 1). Mohammed Shadid and Rick Seltzer, who conducted the poll, justifiably concluded that "the current leadership of the PLO is far more moderate than the Palestinian population residing in the West Bank and Gaza Strip."

This judgment was confirmed in November 1989 by the spectacular success of fundamentalist Muslims in the Jordanian elections. Not only did they win 32 out of 80 seats, but they did so in spite of extensive gerrymandering to weaken them. More to the point, the fundamentalists scored their largest margins of victory in the districts of Amman where Palestinians are concentrated; significantly, much of their appeal had to do with their call for a *jihad* to destroy Israel. And this is not just rhetoric, since Jordanian fundamentalists retain close links with their counterparts in the territories occupied by Israel, to whom they send money, arms, explosives, and commands.

Those counterparts, recently organized into Hamas and Islamic Jihad, are more extreme in their rejection of Israel even than anti-Arafat PLO leaders like George Habash, Nayif Hawatma, Ahmad Jibril, Abu Musa, and Abu Nidal. A Hamas leaflet dated March 14, 1988 declared "'No' to peace with the Zionist entity. . . . Where is there justice with them still possessing one inch on the coast of Haifa and Acre?" For his part, Sheikh Khalil Quqa of Gaza is opposed to "giving the Jews even one granule of sand." Were elections held, Hamas could win 40 percent of the vote in the West Bank and more in Gaza—which goes far toward explaining why the PLO has so many reservations about elections.

In the time-honored fashion of Palestinian politics, moderates are being silenced by systematic intimidation. During the first half of 1989, 710 of the attacks by Palestinians were aimed at Jews, but nearly as many, 670, were directed against Arabs. Favorite targets included village elders, reporters, policemen, and day laborers in Israel. In part, the killings resulted from the rivalry between Hamas and the PLO for leadership in the occupied territories.

No wonder, then, that when ABC's *Nightline* asked a group of Palestinians in early 1988 if they would accept Israel inside the pre-1967 borders, not one would unequivocally say yes. Mahmoud Darwish, a man widely regarded as "the standard-bearer of PLO doves," wrote a poem in early 1988 addressed to Israelis which included these lines:

> So leave our country
> Our land, our sea,
> Our wheat, our salt, our wounds
> Everything, and leave
> The memories of memory . . .

Some Israelis inclined to Palestinianism despaired over this poem; others struggled to interpret away its unambiguous hostility.

If poetry can be ignored, acts of hair-raising barbarism cannot. It is bad enough that the *intifada* has inspired Palestinian brutality against both Jews (including the hijacking of a bus over a cliff) and "collaborators" (including many back-alley ax murders); worse is the fact that these deeds have been celebrated by the Palestinian leaders. For example, the official Voice of the PLO, broadcasting from Baghdad, described the bus operation as "heroic."

AS A final example of hostility, it is worth noting a debate that took place in late 1988 in the pages of *Ad-Dustur*, a Jordanian daily. Nimr Sirhan, a Palestinian historian, kicked it off with an article advocating recognition of Israel in return for an independent Palestinian state. Sirhan made it very clear that he saw this as a temporary expedient in anticipation of eliminating Israel:

> Let us learn a lesson from what Saladin did during the era of the Crusades, when he accept-

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> ed a liberated part of Palestine and recognized a Crusader state on another part of Palestine, until a century later when [the Egyptian kings] al-Ashraf Khalil and al-Ashraf Qala'un unleashed their swords and wiped out the Crusader invasion. . . . I tell those demanding liberation from the river to the sea that the moment when their dictum will be achieved will come later.

Although Sirhan advocated a two-state solution only as a step on the way to the destruction of Israel, his article provoked an uproar. "We will not recognize Israel, no matter what the justifications," wrote Rawda al-Farkh al-Hudhud, an author of children's books. Isma'il al-Ma'mun added: "I say no to Israel, no to recognition, no to despair, no to defeat, and no to surrender." Badr Abd al-Haqq responded in *Ar-Ra'y*, another Jordanian newspaper:

> I am one of those who believe that if established, the independent Palestinian state should be on the area that extends from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River. . . .
>
> I would go even further, transcending what is no longer acceptable, and say that I would like to throw the Jews into the sea, to be devoured by the hungry Mediterranean fish.

What weight do Arafat's half-hearted and ambiguous statements carry in the face of this avalanche of opinion?

The unhappy conclusion cannot be avoided: there can be either an Israel or a Palestine, but not both. To think that two states can stably and peacefully coexist in the small territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is to be either naive or duplicitous. If the last seventy years teach anything, it is that there can be only one state west of the Jordan River. Therefore, to those who ask why the Palestinians must be deprived of a state, the answer is simple: grant them one and a chain of events is set in motion that will lead either to its extinction or to the extinction of Israel.

SEVEN years ago, I wrote in these pages* that the PLO is essentially a creature of the Arab states, and that "it will moderate only when its Arab patrons want it to; so long as the Arab consensus needs it to reject Israel, it must do so." I also implied, noting the quiescence of the West Bank and Gaza, that those Palestinians who had first-hand familiarity with Israel did not share the PLO's fantasies about eliminating the Jewish state.

In retrospect, it appears that I was right on the first point but not on the second. The Arab states have moderated their policies toward Israel and, as though on cue, Arafat has moved with them, moderating his stand, too. But I was wrong in expecting that the Palestinians living in the territories would remain more moderate than the Arab states.

Therefore, if it once appeared that progress in the Arab-Israeli conflict was contingent on getting the Palestinians involved, it now seems just as critical to keep them away, and to pay more attention to the Arab states. (The peace process does have one redeeming virtue, however: it provides Israelis and Palestinians with something other than sheer confrontation and is thus desirable as an end in itself. The implication is that the slower the course of negotiation, the better.)

Unfortunately, Washington is so imbued with Palestinianism that it no longer presses the Arab states to come to terms with Israel. Surely the authorities in Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq should be pushed to go at least as far as Arafat did in Geneva in saying that they accept the 1947 UN resolution partitioning Palestine; that they renounce terrorism in all its forms; and that they seek peace with Israel. The leaders of these states should then be pressured into calling off their economic boycott of Israel; into agreeing to rescind the "Zionism-is-racism" resolution at the United Nations; and into ceasing their efforts to expel Israel from the General Assembly. Most important of all, they should be prodded into ending their permanent state of war against Israel.

Washington's fixation on Palestinianism has also stood in the way of testing Moscow's claim to have applied "new thinking" to the Middle East. Yet a true shift in Soviet policies would mean a reduction in Moscow's military aid to Syria, as well as similar reductions in the supply of weaponry to Libya and South Yemen. Once this is done, Moscow might be persuaded to cooperate with the U.S. on reducing arms transfers to the Middle East (from China especially), stopping the spread of ballistic-missile and nuclear technology, and reasserting, by force if necessary, the ban on chemical warfare.

But the key is Syria. However much weakened, it remains Israel's single most formidable opponent.

In the aftermath of the Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979, the basic diplomatic question has been, "Who will be the second to make peace with Israel?" Many Israelis used to assume it would be Lebanon, until the fiasco of the May 1983 accords showed that the Lebanese were too weak. King Hussein of Jordan knows that he too lacks the strength to make peace with Israel by himself. And I hold that the Palestinians are also deficient. But if the first Arab party to make peace was the strongest, then it follows that the second must be the second strongest—Syria. And given the "new thinking" in Moscow and Syria's dire economic situation, that country, as Patrick Clawson concludes in his recent pathbreaking study of its economy, is now "vulnerable to outside pressure." The time has come for such pressure to be applied.

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* "How Important is the PLO?," COMMENTARY, April 1983.

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Mencken on Trial

Joseph Epstein

> Reading what is printed about myself, I am made to realize how little a man makes himself understood by his writings.
>
> —H.L. MENCKEN

WAS H.L. Mencken an anti-Semite? This past winter the question began to seem a rhetorical one, its answer so obvious that it appeared to call for another question in reply. Was H.L. Mencken an anti-Semite? Is the Pope Catholic? Do accordion players fancy gaudy rings? Do grizzly bears neglect to use dental floss?

For years there has been muffled talk, and some of it not so muffled, about Mencken and the Jews. The first, the most direct, the least sparing came from Charles Angoff, who was an assistant editor on Mencken's famous magazine, the *American Mercury,* and later its managing editor. In 1956, the year of Mencken's death, Angoff, who was himself Jewish, published *H.L. Mencken: A Portrait from Memory.* A chapter of nine pages in this book is given over to "The Jews," and its author's chief charge reads:

> Mencken's "anti-Semitism" could be sensed better than described in words, because it was so deep-seated and so furtive and so obscured by professions of loyalty to the principles of civil liberties and to what he would call "the canons of civilized living." His anti-Semitism, in other words, was of the same kind as the anti-Semitism of Richard Strauss and Knut Hamsun and Arnold Toynbee and former President Abbott Lawrence Lowell of Harvard.

Other expressions of disquiet have been heard. Some time ago a Jewish newspaper in Baltimore, the city where Mencken was born and where he lived his entire life, ran a longish piece recording a number of less than respectful if not downright anti-Semitic-sounding remarks attributed to Mencken. In Carl Bode's *Mencken* (1969), which remains the most ample biography, anti-Semitism does not arise as a serious issue. But in a book of 1978, *Mencken: A Study of His Thought,* by Charles A. Fecher, there appears a troubling footnote about a manila envelope of notes stowed away in the Mencken Room of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. According to Fecher, if this material were ever to become public, it could give rise to "the accusation, which [Mencken] had to face a number of times while he was living, that he was anti-Semitic." But Fecher then concludes:

> Actually, and in spite of these notes, I think it safe to say that he was not, but anyone seeking to defend him from the charge would admittedly have his hands full if the prosecution were permitted to introduce the folder in evidence.

The interesting twist here is that Fecher, whose 1978 book about Mencken is almost wholly admiring, has himself now become the prosecutor. The venue of the trial is *The Diary of H.L. Mencken,* of which Fecher is the editor.* His prosecution is neither enthusiastic nor relentless but instead disillusioned and regretful. But it is, make no mistake, emphatic. In his introduction, after noting Mencken's strong antipathy to radio and to the journalism current in America during his later years, Fecher writes that "much more important, and infinitely less comprehensible, are his attitudes toward the war that was raging during much of this time, toward Franklin D. Roosevelt, toward black people, and most especially toward Jews." Two pages later he reminds his readers that he had earlier sought to defend Mencken from the charge of anti-Semitism; but that was before he had seen Mencken's diary. "Today," he writes, "I would be much less ready to take such a stand. Let it be said at once, clearly and unequivocally: Mencken was an anti-Semite." Qualifications follow, but no plea for special dispensation: ". . . the ugly strain runs through these pages almost like a leitmotif, and it would have been intellectually and editorially dishonest to try to excise it and pretend it was not there." Case open.

The trial has been played fairly prominently in the press. Charles A. Fecher's own comments, along with a selection of items from the *Diary,* aroused sufficient interest to put the story of Mencken's alleged prejudice against Jews, as well

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as blacks, on the front pages of a number of major newspapers. The New York *Times* op-ed page, on December 13, 1989, ran two pieces on the Mencken *Diary:* one by Russell Baker, who grew up a few blocks from Mencken's Hollins Street house and who now explained that "in that setting, southwest Baltimore in the 1930's and 1940's, we were all racists and anti-Semites, and much more that now seems just as unsavory"; and a second by a journalist named Gwinn Owens, whose father comes in for some rough treatment in the *Diary* and who suggested that this book "reveals a man who was shockingly anti-Semitic and racist, to the point where his stature as a giant of American letters may be in danger."

In a review in the daily New York *Times,* Herbert Mitgang, allowing that the offending content makes up only a small part of the *Diary* ("perhaps 1 or 2 percent"), asserted that "of course, even a few drops of midnight poison are enough to damage Mencken's reputation seriously." In the Washington *Post,* Doris Grumbach, under the title "Mencken: Just Plain Anti-Semitism," closed her generally hostile review by attacking anyone who might choose to defend the book or Mencken as possessing "an anti-Semitic sensibility." Meanwhile, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, a newspaper publisher who is a member of the Oglala tribe announced that because of "the racist and sexist remarks Mencken made in his diary," he wished to return the H.L. Mencken Writing Award he had won four years earlier.

As someone who has written in an admiring way about H.L. Mencken, I took none of this as particularly good news. I am well beyond the age of expecting unblemished behavior from writers, artists, or musicians, and I am no longer even sure that I agree with George Orwell that "one has the right to expect ordinary decency even of a poet." But about H.L. Mencken, despite all his youthful bravura claims of rowdiness, there has always seemed to me something not just essentially bourgeois but upstanding. Anti-Semitism, whatever else it is, is not upstanding.

One in what might be a small chain of keys to understanding H.L. Mencken has to do with the vast discrepancies between his public pronouncements and his private behavior. Not an uncommon phenomenon, this, especially among intellectuals and artists; in practice, it usually reveals itself through statements of the highest moral tone behind which one regularly finds behavior selfish and squalid. With Mencken, however, something like the reverse obtains. He railed against the asininity of marriage, and then, at fifty, married and lived happily with a woman who he knew was very ill and who died five years later. Against the clergy he fired away every chance he got, but he took time to help a nun with her Ph.D. dissertation on James Huneker and dined frequently with a Methodist bishop nearly all of whose views he had mocked in print. He made himself out a heavy boozer ("with a liver far beyond pills or prayer"), yet, though he imbibed his share, he regulated his drinking, never let it interfere with the prodigious amount of work he turned out, and in the end, as Churchill said of his own drinking, got more out of alcohol than alcohol got out of him. And of the Jews? Alistair Cooke once said, with only slight exaggeration, that *all* of Mencken's best friends were Jews.

MENCKEN wrote of Beethoven: "He is a great tragic poet, and like all great tragic poets, he is obsessed by a sense of the inscrutable meaninglessness of life." Mencken was not so much obsessed by as convinced of the inscrutable meaninglessness of life. He believed that no one knew why sin and suffering were sent into the world, what motives lay behind natural laws, why man had his present form, or who created the universe. Anyone who claimed to know the answer to any of these questions he took for a con artist. Mencken was, if a philosophical term be wanted, a laughing pessimist, who held that although we may live in the dark, that need not prevent our laughing in the dark. The laughter came, for him, from the spectacle of what he called "abounding quackeries"; a quack was anyone who claimed to penetrate the meaning of life. He felt it important to learn to laugh lest one slide down the chute of melancholy.

Mencken truly, even hugely, enjoyed the spectacle, and so long as he did, the enjoyment shone magically through his writing. A decade or so ago, I was asked to give the annual H.L. Mencken Lecture at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. (There is something like a patriotic feeling about Mencken in Baltimore; the lecture takes place on what is officially designated as Mencken Day.) In preparation for this lecture, over a five- or six-week period, I read through a number of Mencken's books. I read them early in the morning and I noted an odd thing, which was that, so pleasing was the prospect, I nearly bounded out of bed to do so. Mencken used to make fun of what he called "uplifters," but reading him seemed to uplift me greatly. And not me alone. At dinner after the lecture, I sat next to an amiable Baltimore businessman of no literary pretensions whatsoever, who happened to be the current president of the Mencken Society. "What do you get out of reading H.L. Mencken?" I recall asking him. "That's easy," he said. "He makes me happy."

The spectacle that Mencken's own performance provided was itself mightily impressive. The best account I know of it was written by Walter Lippmann, who in 1926 called Mencken "the most powerful personal influence on this whole generation of educated people," and who described him at the top of his game:

His humor is so full of animal well-being that

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> he acts upon his public like an elixir. The wounds he inflicts heal quickly. His blows have the clean brutality of a natural phenomenon. They are directed by a warm and violent but an unusually healthy mind which is not divided, as most minds are, by envy and fear and ambition and anxiety. When you can explain the heightening effect of a spirited horse, of a swift athlete, of a dancer really in control of his own body, when you can explain why watching them you feel more alive yourself, you can explain the quality of his influence.

Mencken achieved these effects through an alchemical distillation of superior craft, delicious wit, and utter courageousness of opinion. The first can be acquired; the second is a gift; the third may no longer have a place in American life.

Some while ago I had lunch with a man who wanted to produce a one-man show, on the model of Hal Holbrook's *Mark Twain Tonight,* to be called *Mencken Alive!* A nice title, I thought, and when I asked how he had come upon it he replied that he still occasionally heard people say, when they were confronted with some fresh hypocrisy or novel piece of nonsense, if only Mencken were alive today to write about this. But in fact one wonders if Mencken would flourish among us today. Too many subjects might be out of bounds to him. Thirty-four years after his death in 1956, he might be surprised to discover that there is rather less freedom of speech than when he was alive—freedom of the kind on which he absolutely depended.

One large area now out of bounds is the ethnic subject. To it a single unwavering rule applies: If you can't say anything nice about an ethnic group, shut up. Since there is much that is not nice to say, all such talk has therefore become a form of oral *samizdat.* One speaks among friends but one almost never writes about the ethnic subject, or remarks upon it in any public way. Given the tumult that the posthumous publication of Mencken's *Diary* has caused, perhaps one ought to say it is safest not even to remark upon it in private, to oneself.

As one who keeps a journal and has a decided taste for the ethnic subject, I cannot help wondering if I ought not clean up my own private thoughts a bit. In recent months I can think of at least two damaging entries in this line. The first runs: "Read thin (intellectually thin) book on gossip by two insane-looking Jewish sociologists in preparation for my *American Scholar* essay." And then there is this item: "Amusing conversation over the telephone with the novelist McG. Much Irish charm, Boston accent thrown in at no extra cost. Felt I wanted to bring a drink to the phone." Of course I am Jewish, and I am married to a woman whose father was Irish, which may get me off the hook here, though with the thought police coming into even greater control, possibly not. But then I am reminded that McG. (as I am calling him here) told me a story about a Jewish woman, an editor in New York, who in a book review wrote the following: "With the exception of Oscar Wilde, the Irish have never been known for their sexual prowess." The sentence so ticked him off that McG. wrote to the woman, whom he knew, wondering if it would not also be true to say that "The Jews, too, are not especially known for their sexual prowess, with the exception of Leopold and Loeb." She never spoke to him again.

Generally the Irish, in my experience, do not exhibit too great a touchiness about ethnic jokes or even slurs. In this same conversation, when the subject of newspapers happened to come up, I mentioned that nowadays I turn directly to the obituaries. "Ah," McG, sighed, "the obituaries. We Irish refer to them as the sporting pages." I had not heard that before. If I had known him a bit better perhaps I would have asked McG. if he knew the definition of an Irish homosexual, which turns out to be an Irishman who prefers women to alcohol. I came across that in Ned Rorem's *Nantucket Diary.* It is a joke that reminds one that homosexuals might just as well be an ethnic group, since they have developed the requisite touchiness, many among them speak of themselves as if they were a single unified body, and no one is permitted to say anything critical about homosexuality in public. (I recall a reference in one of H.L. Mencken's essays of the 1920's to a moralizing minister caught in a YMCA with a boy having "non-Euclidean sex"; try that out in public today.)

I used to tell a story, which took place in my twenties, about the time I answered an ad in the New York *Times* for a house rental in Babylon, Long Island. The owner, a Mr. Mitropoulos, turned out to be almost a stage-comedy Greek: florid, barrel-chested, thick wavy white hair beginning about an inch and a half above his eyebrows. As soon as I sat down next to him in the front seat of his 1959 Lincoln, we shook hands, he looked me in the eye, and in a thick Greek accent he asked me if I was Jewish; after I allowed that I was, he said:

"Mr. Epstein, before we begin our business dealings you should know it takes six Syrians, four Turks, and two Jews to cheat a Greek."

I didn't, by the way, rent the house. I do occasionally tell the story, though not to everyone. I am one of those touchy Jews myself, generally on the lookout for insult, a veritable truffle dog of anti-Semitism. Reading, I espy the word *Jew* a few paragraphs ahead on the page, my mental radar begins to twirl and twitter, knives come unsheathed, torpedoes click into firing position. My response has been bred in the bone, not only from millennia of history but from growing up in the city of Chicago, where Jews were a small

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but prominent minority and where what one was—the phrase "ethnic affiliation" had not yet come into being—was no trivial datum. Next to the stereotyped image of the Jews, that of the Irish was almost a pleasure: a charming boozer is much to be preferred to a cunning, conniving, under-the-table man, and this is putting the stereotype most politely.

ANTI-SEMITISM has always constituted xenophobia to the highest power—and then some. It has been irresistible to fools throughout history, and not to fools alone. Among serious literary men, Dostoevsky, G.K. Chesterton, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence went for it. What, one is now forced to ask, about H.L. Mencken?

At stake is the reputation of a writer until now taken to be this country's greatest journalist, one of our most important literary critics, and an original comic talent of the highest order. If H.L. Mencken was an anti-Semite, all that is not merely diminished but perhaps, in the current atmosphere, wiped out. The reputation of an artist of the first magnitude can perhaps withstand the charge of anti-Semitism. (". . . We spent the week-end at Eastbourne, visiting some friends called Schiff—very nice Jews," wrote T.S. Eliot in 1920 to his mother.) But for a writer like Mencken, whose work deals directly in assertion and strong opinion, filled with craft but without the mediation of art, the charge of anti-Semitism or any other genuinely vicious prejudice constitutes a devastating blow against him. Those of a major poet's works that are not directly marred by anti-Semitism remain beautiful. But all of Mencken's views are suddenly in deepest doubt. It would be a sadness and a serious injustice to get him wrong on this matter.

The particular charges against Mencken as they have emerged in the reviews and stories about his *Diary* are that he was a racist as well as an anti-Semite, that he was disregarding of Hitler, and that he was more than a little nuts on the subject of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Based on a reading of the *Diary* alone, a case can be made for some of these charges. Alas for quick and simple judgments, there is more than the *Diary* to be dealt with in Mencken's vast literary production—at one point in the *Diary* he estimates that he has written more than ten million words. For example, the last column that Mencken wrote for the Baltimore *Sun* on January 1, 1939 (before resigning in disagreement over its position on Roosevelt and World War II) was titled "The Problem of the Refugees" and was a plea to save the Jews of Central Europe from Hitler. It could not have been more correct. The following passages ought to be kept in mind alongside the charges of anti-Semitism against their author:

> Either we are willing to give refuge to the German Jews, or we are not willing. If the former, then here is one vote for bringing them in by the first available ships, and staking them sufficiently to set them on their feet. That is the only way we can really help them, and that is the only way we can avoid going down into history as hypocrites almost as grotesque as the English.
>
> The initiative should be taken by the so-called Christians who are now so free with weasel words of comfort and flattery, and so curiously stingy with practical aid. In particular, it should be taken by the political mountebanks who fill the air with hollow denunciations of Hitler, and yet never lift a hand to help an actual Jew.

These are, of course, public utterances, brave and bold ones. What Mencken wrote in his *Diary* are private utterances, which are very different, as he knew quite as well as anyone, and perhaps better than most of those who have written about the *Diary*. It is far from clear that Mencken wanted his *Diary* published; it strikes me as clearer than not that he preferred that it never be published. When he deposited it with his other papers at the Enoch Pratt Library, Charles A. Fecher reports, he affixed a label instructing that it was "not to be put at the disposal of readers until twenty-five years after my death, and is then to be open only to students engaged in critical or historical investigation, approved after proper inquiry by the Chief Librarian." At the Pratt Library, the board of trustees decided otherwise. The material seemed to them too interesting and too valuable to be kept exclusively for the perusal of a few stray scholars, and so they sought the legal opinion of the attorney general of the State of Maryland, who in 1985 ruled that "the Library has a legal right to publish the diaries." It now begins to look as if the trustees did Mencken, or at least his reputation, a bad turn. They fed a man known for his candor into the maw of an age wishing to be known for its spirit of caring.

THE circumstances under which Mencken kept his diary are worth underscoring. For one thing, he did not begin it until he was fifty years old, in 1930. The final entry is dated November 15, 1948, eight days before the stroke from which he would recover to live until January 1956, but with the cruel trick of brain damage that rendered him, most word-minded of men, unable either to read or write.

Mencken's *Diary* entries are written neither in the staccato, telegraphic mode of many diarists nor in the often rather gaudy comic style of Mencken's journalism. They are stylistically straightforward and absolutely correct. (Mencken seems never to have written an ungainly sentence.) He typed out many of the entries; some are quite long. Fecher reports that this published version of the *Diary* constitutes roughly a third of the

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whole. As editor, he made his selections with the intention of giving a rounded sense of Mencken's life during the eighteen years chronicled, and my sense is that he has succeeded. I assume, too, that the amount of allegedly objectionable material Fecher chose to include is roughly representative of the whole, and that there is some material of the same nature in the unpublished portions.

The years during which Mencken kept his diary were for him dark ones—years of loss and defeat. At the beginning of the *Diary,* Mencken has been married only three months; he is still editor of the *American Mercury;* the Depression is under way. He will lose, first, his wife, the anniversary of whose death he often notes. ("Sara will be dead ten years tomorrow. It seems a long, long while, yet she still remains living to me, and seldom a waking hour passes that I do not think of her.") He will lose his popularity among the young, whom the Depression will drive into a left-wing radicalism that he—enemy of puritanism, of the genteel tradition, of mainstream American politicians—thought no more than another form of utopian quackery. He will watch Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal, neither of which he could abide, go from strength to strength with the electorate. With the onset of World War II, and his decision no longer to write for the Baltimore *Sun* papers, he will lose his platform as a regular commentator on current events. Friends will die; the talents of other friends will dissipate. Possessed, like any true hypochondriac, of vast knowledge of his own health, he sees life as a race between his sclerotic arteries and his bum heart. He is a man approaching the end of his life alone, and feeling greatly out of synch with those around him; he does not find the world, every day and in every way, getting better and better. Quite the reverse.

If the *Diary* is dark, even at times gloomy, it is by no means uninteresting. Not the least interesting thing about it is that while Mencken was writing its often bleak entries he was also writing the three autobiographical volumes—*Happy Days* (1940), *Newspaper Days* (1941), and *Heathen Days* (1943)—that are so filled with the love of life, its oddity, comedy, and richness, and that have given his readers so much pleasure. Of course, in the autobiographies he was writing about the past. It was only the present that put him off, with its insipidity, its intellectual conformity, its politics. Writing in the *Diary* about his father, a businessman who worked diligently until his death at forty-four and during that time earned enough to keep his family in comfort and saved enough to maintain it indefinitely afterward, Mencken notes: "If he were alive today he would be a member of that class of reactionaries which is execrated by all right-thinking Americans."

Demoralization over the spirit of the age was not, however, permitted to get in the way of productivity. "Looking back over a life of hard work," he writes in 1945, "I find that my only regret is that I didn't work harder." When he has bouts of bad health, his principal complaint is that he cannot sit as long at his desk as when healthy. Between the ages of sixty and sixty-five, despite a number of illnesses, he will produce no fewer than five books, including a thick supplement to his monumental *The American Language.* His correspondence is never less than heavy, and some days he receives and answers as many as 25 or 30 letters, "mainly from persons I don't know." Even though he no longer writes for the paper, nearly every working day he goes to the offices of the Baltimore *Sun* where he continues to be paid to attend business meetings and serve as a consultant. He works on future books, some of which he eventually has to abandon. In 1943 he estimates that he has written 65,000 words in his diary alone, "the equivalent," he records graphomaniacally, "of a good-sized book." He takes it as a matter of pride that he will probably leave as complete a record of his life and times as any writer who has ever lived.

The portrait of Mencken that emerges as one works one's way through the eighteen years covered by the *Diary* is that of a man who is not only out of it but rather takes pride in being out of it. He does not drive a car. He thinks radio is aimed at imbeciles; and television, which he glimpses in the late 1940's, he is sure will be even worse. Newspapers increasingly cater to morons, not least among them the *Sun* papers in Baltimore, which "degenerate rapidly to the estate of third-rate provincial journals" and which may one day be remembered "largely and perhaps even mainly because I worked for them." (True enough, as it turns out.) The firm of Alfred A. Knopf, whose author he has long been and on whose board of directors he sits, begins to publish trashy books—specifically, in 1944, a book of prayers for soldiers and sailors. Everywhere he looks he sees institutions in decay. Even the quality of beer has dropped off badly. "The decent pleasures of life have diminished enormously in my time," he writes in his sixty-sixth year.

Some of this might be put down to growing older. But more appears to be going on, for the bitterness of many of the entries in the *Diary* is real and cuts deep. Nothing literary about it, either, like the aristocratic crankiness of the older Henry Adams, or the late-life cut-rate Hobbesianism of Edmund Wilson. A streak of such darkness, an air of hopelessness, always ran in Mencken. As early as 1927, when he was forty-seven, in an essay titled "On Suicide," he wrote:

> . . . I am conscious of no vast, overwhelming and unattainable desires. I want nothing that I can't get. But it remains my conclusion, at the gate of senility, that the whole thing is a

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> grandiose futility, and not even amusing. The end is always a vanity, and usually a sordid one, without any noble touch of the pathetic. . . .

Later, in the *Diary,* one finds him writing, "Nine-tenths of the people who call me by telephone I don't want to talk to, and three-fourths of the people I have to take to lunch I don't want to see." Although he is inevitably the best of family men—visiting relatives, ready to pick up the tab for the nursing-home bills of a mildly senile uncle—he records that "my brother August and I, sitting by the fire in the evening, often congratulate ourselves on the fact that we have no children, and that there is only one child in our whole immediate family." The future he envisions as endless wars in which "the boys stand a good chance of being butchered in their young manhood, and boys and girls together face a world that will be enormously more uncomfortable than the one my generation has known."

Easily the bleakest entry in the published *Diary* concerns the death of one Lillie Fortenbaugh, Mencken's neighbor for fifty years. "She was," he writes, "a complete moron and led a life of utter vacuity." He describes her days, devoted to window shopping, going to movies, listening to speeches on the radio and the "yowling of so-called news commentators." "The lives of such poor simpletons always fascinate me," he writes:

> So far as I know, Lillie never did anything in all her years that was worth doing, or said anything worth hearing. . . . It is hard to think of a more placid life, and she apparently enjoyed it, but it is likewise hard to think of one more hollow. It was as insignificant, almost, as the life of her dog.

Rough stuff, but then during these years Mencken's nerves must have been rubbed raw by what he judged to be the horrendous state of the world and by the fact that for nearly twelve years he had to live under the presidency of the man he despised more than any other in American politics and whom he more than once described as having "the Christian Science smile." Roosevelt-haters have always been abundant, but Mencken was among the most strenuous. Various reasons have been adduced for the strength of his antipathy. One has it that he never forgave Roosevelt for one-upping him decisively at the 1934 Gridiron dinner for journalists in Washington. At that dinner, Roosevelt, following Mencken, who had delivered a humorous and rather mild attack on the New Deal, read a powerful polemic against journalism that turned out to be taken from a scathing piece of Mencken's own, titled "Journalism in America." It left the audience in shock. Mencken does not mention this in his diary, but according to Fecher he swore to "get even."

Yet Mencken would have had ample reason to hate Roosevelt without requiring personal animus as a goad. He held, to begin with, that "all government, in its essence, is a conspiracy against the superior man," and so it followed that the less there was of government, the better all 'round. The notion that professional social workers like Harry Hopkins or the Brain Trust gathered together by Roosevelt knew what was best for the country Mencken found appalling. ("Of such sort," he wrote in 1935 in the Baltimore *Sun,* "are the young wizards who now sweat to save the plain people from the degradations of capitalism, which is to say, from the degradations of working hard, saving their money, and paying their way.") His distrust of politicians generally was very great, and in a lecture at Columbia, "The Politician," he remarked that what got them elected was "simply their power to impress and enchant the intellectually underprivileged." Roosevelt, to his mind, gave all this an extra spin. "He was the first American to penetrate to the real depths of vulgar stupidity," Mencken wrote in his diary the day after the President's death. "He never made the mistake of overestimating the intelligence of the American mob. He was its unparalleled professor."

And on top of it all, Roosevelt was the President who led the United States into World War II. To Mencken this must have brought back the nightmarish quality of his own experience during World War I, and Roosevelt must in some ways have reminded him of Woodrow Wilson, who had "all the peculiar illusions and delusions that belong to a pedagogue gone *meshugga.*" Early in World War I, before America came in on the side of the British, Mencken had written pro-German pieces for the *Sun;* these drove readers wild and caused grave problems for his editors, whose line was pro-British.

Anti-German feeling in the United States seems to have been greater during World War I than that provoked by the monstrousness of the Nazis during World War II. "I will be very interested to hear from you how St. Louis is taking the affair . . . ," T.S. Eliot wrote to his mother in 1917. "I can imagine the mob breaking the windows at Faust's Restaurant, and sacking the Anheuser-Busch, and Mr. Busch giving a million dollars toward national defense." During World War I, the German language was outlawed from many public schools, Beethoven was regularly eliminated from concert programs, sauerkraut was renamed Liberty Cabbage. Around this time, I have read, Germans and Jews in the United States who had *stein* in their last names began pronouncing it *steen,* in the hope of de-Germanizing themselves.

In this atmosphere Mencken became *persona non grata* as a journalist, and was in effect blacklisted from almost all newspapers and magazines. He put his energy into writing books. But he never forgot the overheated American reaction to World

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War I, and this must have conditioned his own highly skeptical reaction to our entry into World War II. The hysteria induced by war, the clamp it put on criticism, the spirit of propaganda it fostered, all made him extremely edgy. His complaint against the *Sun*, which plays throughout the *Diary* during the war years, is that in reporting the war it had let its critical guard drop and was reduced to the role of cheerleader.

To suggest, however, that Mencken was pro-Hitler, as some critics of the *Diary* have done, is calumny. Fecher does not go this far, though he does cite the paucity of references to Hitler in the diary with (one senses) eyebrows raised. Yet a diary is not a current-events course, and in fact very few entries in Mencken's *Diary* touch on the news. Mencken had a good eye for tyranny. As early as 1919 he knew that the Russian Revolution was a cheat; and in 1922 he wrote, "Communism, as the example of Russia shows, is not a fountain that gushes peace, justice, and plenty, but a sewer in which they are drowned." But partly because of his experience in World War I, and partly because of his abiding suspicion of the British, he tended at first to underplay the danger of Hitler and the Nazis. In 1936 he wrote to Theodore Dreiser, "My belief is that the Jews in this country are diligently preparing for themselves the damnedest anti-Semitic movement ever heard of. . . . Hitler has driven them all crazy." About the potential of Hitler, he could not have been more wrong.

But about Hitler himself Mencken was unequivocal. In 1939 he wrote to the Yale sociologist A.G. Keller: "I dislike all of Hitler's ideas save one, and that is the idea that England should keep out of Central Europe. When it set up Czechoslovakia and Poland it made another war inevitable." To another correspondent he wrote that he was "entirely out of sympathy with the method used by Hitler to handle the Jewish question," and that he was not unaware that "intolerable brutalities have been practiced." When the Friends of Germany, a group sympathetic to the Nazis, offered Mencken an honorary membership, he declined instanter, replying that the Nazi politicians, owing to their "extraordinary imbecility," had "destroyed at one stroke a work of rehabilitation [between Germans and Americans] that has been going on since the war, and they have made it quite impossible to set up any rational defense of their course."

IN THIS same letter Mencken likened Hitler's speeches to those of "an imperial wizard of the Ku Klux Klan"—and this brings up the question of Mencken's own views of blacks. Fecher does not actually use the word "racist" to describe those views, but he does say that nothing could "erase a deeply ingrained conviction [on Mencken's part] that black people were by their very nature inferior to white." Fecher quotes Mencken referring to his housemaid as belonging "to the Afro-American race, and show[ing] many of its psychological stigmata"; and Fecher adds, Mencken "considers it unnecessary to go on and explain what these 'stigmata' are." In fact, in this particular instance Mencken makes it perfectly plain that he is referring to the woman's superstitiousness, for she does not want to touch a house key recently in the possession of another woman who had worked for the Menckens and who had just died. Apparently, under contemporary thought control it is impermissible to suggest that an uneducated black woman of a certain time and certain place might have been superstitious (*kayn ayin horeh*). If you can't say anything nice. . . .

The most odious of racial epithets comes up once in the *Diary*, in a non-racial context, when Mencken uses the phrase "nigger in the woodpile." But Mencken was highly democratic in his mockery of all ethnic groups: Scots, Irish, Greeks, his own "Krauts" (to use a phrase he did not shy away from, either). About blacks specifically the *Diary* contains a number of items that, quite apart from their truth quotient, have been ruled out as unsayable today. For example, bemoaning the general decay of the neighborhoods surrounding his Hollins Street house, Mencken writes:

> Unhappily, the low-class blacks who formed part of the wartime immigration show no sign of returning home. They find life in Baltimore much pleasanter than it was in their native wilds, and when hard times come again they will all go on the dole. The city jail is already full of them, and four or five are in the death house.

Like all interesting writers, Mencken went in for risky generalizations, to which, when possible, he preferred to give a comic twist: "Why is it as surprising to find an unassuming and intelligent fellow among [actors] as to find a Greek without fleas," is a fair example. But what saves him is that he always judges individuals above groups and races. In the *Diary*, he notes his attempts to get the journalist George S. Schuyler, a black man, a job on a newspaper or magazine, but without success. "When I compare him to any of the dunderheads now roaring on the *Sun*," he writes, "I am sharply conscious of his enormous superiority. He is not only much more intelligent than they are; he is vastly more honest." Earlier, he recounts a visit to the house in Baltimore in which he was born and which is now in a neighborhood "that has been given over to Negroes for many years, and has steadily deteriorated" (unsayable). The block opposite has been condemned for a federal project of some kind. Meanwhile, he discovers a black man, working with a white plasterer, rehabilitating the house he, Mencken, was born in. He seemed, Mencken writes, "a very intelligent and decent fellow," adding that "in

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even the worst slums there are plenty of such men." But between the government project and his neighbors, he is being gouged, squeezed, sandbagged. "He is one of the forgotten men who always suffer when schemes of uplift are afoot."

As for those of "the Hebrew extraction," as my black sergeant in basic training used to refer to Jews, here the terrain gets rather more tricky. In the published *Diary* Mencken offers no generalizations on the subject. But if someone he writes about is Jewish, he usually (but not always) mentions it. George Boas, a philosophy teacher at Johns Hopkins, is "a brisk, clever Jew," and his wife is "a French Jewess" who, though polite, "finds it hard to conceal her distrust of me as a German." In an entry Fecher does not print but which he quotes in his introduction, we are told that Mencken refers to two well-known Baltimore businessmen as "dreadful kikes." But he sometimes lets opportunities escape that no true anti-Semite would: he mentions, for example, a professional deadbeat in Baltimore named Jerome P. Fleishman, but says nothing about his being Jewish, although his name would certainly suggest it. On the other hand, the sales manager at Knopf, whose idea it was to print the trashy prayer book mentioned earlier, is named Bernard Smith, of whom Mencken comments: "What his name was before he changed it I do not know. He, too, is a Jew, and moreover, a jackass." It is possible Mencken is criticizing the man not only for his publishing practice but for his falsity in trying to hide his identity by changing his name.

Then there is the entry about the last Jew in the Maryland Club, which seems to have gotten into all the newspaper stories in which Mencken has been proclaimed an anti-Semite. Mencken was himself a member of the Maryland Club, and here he merely recounts the brief history of Jews in the club as told to him by the club's secretary, whom he has met on the street. These seem to have been two in number: one, a man from out of town named Winter who it turns out changed his name from Winternitz and who nobody knew was Jewish until he brought his very Jewish-looking father as a guest for dinner; and the other a man named Jacob Ulman, who was married to a great-granddaughter of Thomas Jefferson and had little to do with other Jews in Baltimore. The secretary tells Mencken that after the death of Jacob Ulman the board of governors decided there would be no more Jews in the club. Mencken closes the entry with this deadpan sentence: "There is no other Jew in Baltimore who seems suitable."

What, really, is being said here? Since Mencken was quite without conventional snobbery, and since many of his friends in Baltimore were Jews, it hardly seems likely that he actually believed no Jew in Baltimore was good enough to be a member of the Maryland Club (the increasing expensiveness of which he complains about in a later entry). Is it possible he means no Jew in Baltimore is sufficiently fraudulent to divest himself of all his Jewishness and Jewish connections in order to become a member of the club—that no Jew is enough of a stuffed shirt to qualify? It is, I think, quite possible.

A "shrewd Jew" is how Mencken refers to Morris Fishbein, editor in the 1940's of the *Journal of the American Medical Association,* but he ends by saying, "and I am inclined to believe that his services to American medicine have been extremely valuable." Leonard Weinberg, a successful Baltimore attorney who came up through night school, "now represents a great many of the richer Jewish firms in Baltimore. . . . Rather curiously for a lawyer of rich employees, he has maintained a level head, and on occasion has actually represented unions. He is a highly intelligent fellow, and his observations are always sharp and sound." Mencken describes Lawrence Spivak, later known as the founder and producer of the radio and television show *Meet the Press,* as "a young Harvard Jew," then goes on to praise him as "energetic and inelligent" and to remark that "since he became business manager of the *American Mercury* he has increased the advertising revenues, and shown his capacity in other directions."

Once in the *Diary* Mencken substitutes the word "Jews" for Hollywood, and another time he refers to "the Jews of Hollywood"—as in "The Jews of Hollywood have certainly not given [Dreiser] much money"—yet in the 1930's and 1940's, that was not an inaccurate sociological description. He remarks of Charles Angoff that "like most of the other young Jewish intellectuals (but unlike Lawrence Spivak), Angoff inclines to Communism. . . ." And he adds: "Angoff is an excellent managing editor, but his writings remain unimpressive, and his politics are mainly silly." That is certainly a correct appraisal of Angoff's talent as a writer; everything about his Mencken book feels wrong and sounds false—and the general sense that the book conveys is that of a man working off a deep grudge against his subject.

What about the connection Mencken draws between "most of the other young Jewish intellectuals" and Communism? The line was written in 1934, and Jews, especially in New York City, were in fact going in for sectarian Communism in disproportionate numbers. In the *Diary,* Mencken plays on this quite frequently. After a lecture, confronted by hostile questions, he notes that most of the radicals questioning him are Jewish. The unionists causing trouble at the firm of Alfred A. Knopf are also noted as Jewish. Of *PM,* the radical New York newspaper of the 1940's, Mencken writes: "It is simply a Yiddish paper printed in English." Does all this constitute anti-Semitism? Or have we once again hit upon another of those unspeakable subjects?

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Would a serious anti-Semite note, disapprovingly, the anti-Semitism of others? Mencken does, when in the *Diary* he remarks that Dreiser "broke out into an anti-Semitic tirade" against his publisher (Horace Liveright), or that Gerald L.K. Smith "is preparing to get aboard the great anti-Semitic movement now rolling in New York [in 1937]." Mencken also reports Samuel Eliot Morison, the Harvard historian, telling him in 1942 that his students, in Mencken's words, "were mainly Jews, and that few of them showed any capacity."

But more decisive—perhaps most decisive—is the fact that, though greatly opposed to the conduct of World War II, and though detesting Franklin Delano Roosevelt, not once does Mencken blame American entry into the war on the Jews or Jewish pressure groups or on Jewish dealings *sub rosa*. For any sort of earnest anti-Semite, especially one in as generally dark and depressed a state as Mencken was during these years, one would think the temptation to accuse the Jews would have been irresistible. Mencken, at least in those portions of the diary Fecher has chosen to print, resists—completely.

And so, as one runs through the thirty or so references to Jews in the 463 pages of the published *Diary*, one is somewhat surprised, after the newspaper stories, to discover what the fuss has been about. If it is about adjectives, anyone who looks beyond them—beyond what I call the newspaper level of truth—will be disappointed. Mencken, as Lawrence Spivak recently told the writer Sheldon Richman, "talked about Jews the way Jews talked about Jews." Which, one is inclined to add, may be part of the problem.

But let us call this little inquisition to a close. To reverse Charles A. Fecher, let it be said at once, clearly and unequivocally: Mencken may have been tactless, he may have been foolhardy enough to think that a man could write what he pleased in his private diary, he may have been singularly unprescient in failing to realize that what he wrote sixty years ago would be read by an age as happy in its virtue and self-righteousness as our own. But H.L. Mencken was no anti-Semite, no enemy of the Jews. For that, he would have had to be, as in a very different context he called Woodrow Wilson, and as he himself obviously was not, *meshugga*.

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My Two Weeks' Vacation With Norman Mailer

A Story

Robert Riche

Day One

Here we are, just arrived. Our annual two-week summer pilgrimage to Provincetown, Mass. We are renting again this year the small white cottage situated in the quiet East End of town and within sight of the crescent of beach and harbor and encircled waters of Cape Cod bay. Our cottage is not directly on the water, but close enough, across the street from it, opposite a more imposing two-story gray shingled summer house that literally rises from the beach, only a tarred timber bulkhead before it holding back the tides.

We have a right-of-way to the beach, a 41"-wide sandy path bordered by beach grass, overreaching climbing roses, and a large amount of poison ivy. The right-of-way passes alongside and within a few feet of the gray house which, like our cottage, is a property rented out annually to summer vacationists. In past years it has often developed that we have become acquainted with the temporary occupants of the gray house, since invariably there have been children to play with our children, our fifteen-year-old son and fourteen-year-old daughter. And there has always been some sharing of the beach in front of the gray house since it is difficult not to spill over onto it from our narrow right-of-way, the latter extending as it does down to the water over a pile of barnacled and jagged jetty rocks.

It turns out that this year the summer tenant in the gray shingled house across the street from us is Norman Mailer. The writer. And family.

My neighbor is Norman Mailer. We share the same beach. His presence is attested by the prominent display on the bayside verandah of a large punching bag hanging from a hook screwed into a portion of overhanging ceiling, and on the deck, a barbell weighted with metal discs. His mother (I immediately assume it is his mother), a white-haired lady who looks to be in her eighties and who it could be said resembles him, sits in a chair and squints out into the bright light reflected from the bay.

A screen door onto the verandah opens and a little boy of perhaps two years of age comes out, followed by a fat black lady in a print dress and slippers, the housekeeper, I would suppose, probably the wife of some prisoner whom Norman has befriended. The little fellow does a turn, picks up something and reenters the house, the housekeeper following him back in.

Norman Mailer. My neighbor. Though I have never met him, I feel as if I know him. My acquaintance with his writing and the public personage goes back, I hate to think, some twenty-five-plus years. The fact that he is a successful and famous writer, whereas my own efforts as a writer have moved along all these years marginally (if persistently), supported by a string of publicity and journeyman commercial writing jobs, encouraged now and then by a modest off-Broadway play production or minimal government or private grant, provides me with no less a feeling that we have much in common. I think of him familiarly as Norman.

And here we are, neighbors.

I have not seen him yet, but I know he is here. He is in P-Town, across the street from me. Provincetown friends have so informed me of this, the first day of our arrival.

Day Two

Right at the start I meet Norman's wife. Maybe it is too much to say that we actually meet; I *see* her. Carrying groceries. I smile, though she doesn't smile back.

Actually, I suppose, there is no reason why she should smile back. I know who she is because I have seen her picture with her famous husband, and I recognize her as she gets out of a new silver BMW and walks up the brick walk toward the gray shingled house with her paper bags from the A & P. I have not been in our little white cottage long enough for her to have noticed me, to know that this is where I live, that we are neighbors. So when I smile she probably thinks it's a *smirk* by some Provincetown freak trying to make time with her. Probably lots of freaks try to make time with her, smirking at her. She is very good-

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looking, a former model, I understand. I didn't wink, or anything. But the smile, I realize the instant she turns coldly away from me and increases her pace into the house, may have been enough to cause her to complain to her husband. If he were to come out looking for a fight it would not be the best way to start a friendship.

The fact is, I am troubled now because of what happened. Or, rather, did not happen. Did I smile because I was hoping to ingratiate myself? Wouldn't I have smiled no matter who had gotten out of the car carrying groceries into the gray shingled house? Even if she doesn't think I am a freak, she probably thinks I am just dying to meet her celebrated husband. Which is not really true. Is it? No. Yes. Now that the whole subject has come up I would like to resolve it, if for no other reason than to avoid this kind of additional embarrassment in the future. Maybe she didn't even see me smile. It wasn't a big smile.

Day Three

A GOOD beach day, but apparently not for Norman. Where is he? The whole world, it seems, is out in the sun and water today, including, I note with more than common interest, three young ladies who live in the house next door to Norman's and who sunbathe bare-breasted in beach chairs on their bayside deck. From the beach below you can't see very much because their arms act as a shield from the lower angle, and also there's an annoying deck railing. One of them stands up. Lord, mercy, I raise my head, straining much-neglected neck muscles to get a better view as she moves gracefully and unselfconsciously through a door into the dark interior of their house. And suddenly, in a wild moment, it occurs to me why Norman is not down on the beach. More than likely he is ensconced behind a pair of binoculars in a room upstairs in his own house, peering down at the girls on the deck. No railing to hide anything from up there.

Would Norman do that? *I* would, I have to admit it. Maybe he wouldn't because he has this young beautiful wife, this former model. Still, he probably wouldn't mind a peek. Once you're married it always looks pretty good when you see something next door.

I look over at my own wife who is lying beside me, toasting, if not her bare breasts, her bare midriff and shoulders, also hogging most of the blanket. To my surprise, a sudden intense surge of feeling that I associate with belonging or commitment, something akin to love, I think, causes a tingle to run through my body. I put my hand on her arm.

"Finished peeping at the girls?" she says. She doesn't miss a thing. Which, I think, is why as much as for any other reason I love her.

I remove my hand. I'd have to say, I suppose, that she was never as beautiful as Norman Mailer's wife. Still, not so many years younger than I, she is remarkably trim of body, her thighs as firm as those of any twenty-year-old girl, the familiar rounded shores of approach to the home port of entry. Does Norman Mailer feel any more a sense of urgent desire than I do when he gazes upon his young wife? Perhaps he does. I don't care. Norman's wife isn't my type, anyway. She could have smiled yesterday. Also, she is very white. She could use a little sun on her body. Perhaps that's unfair, the case being possibly that she doesn't tan easily. Her hair is red, I think, and redheads sometimes don't tan. More's the pity.

Day Four

WHERE is he? The fourth day already, and no sign of Norman. I conclude he is not here. Probably he is in one of his other homes, the one in Stockbridge, Mass., or in Brooklyn Heights, or who knows where else? Maybe he's meeting with his publisher, concluding a multimillion-dollar deal. The mere thought of such high-finance dealings is like contemplating the wonder of man in space. Norman in Brooklyn Heights, waiting for a phone call from his literary agent.

"They're offering four mil, Norm. I think we're there," says Swifty Lazar, or Scott Meredith, or Sue Mengers.

Norman stands, the better to consider the offer, the man of action. He paces the room, the long phone extension following him around as he talks. He has this unique combination of social influences in his voice: growly New York, with accents of Harvard; the preciseness, if not the prissiness, of a Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and the puckish earthiness of a Rocky Graziano. He brays a little bit. I think he probably likes the way he sounds. I kind of like it myself. It shows complexity, the variety of influences that have touched him in his life, it is interesting.

Norman speaks now. "Go for it, Swifty." Or whoever.

And he hangs up, a moment later settling himself back in his work chair, the one upholstered in sheepskin. Lips compressed in a satisfied smile, he brings his fingers to the keyboard and types the next sentence of the latest new novel he is working on. God! That's the way to live!

Day Five

WHILE Norman makes deals in New York, or wherever, back in Provincetown, meanwhile, all is quiet in and around the gray shingled house except for the occasional appearance of one or the other of his two older sons—a sandy-haired fifteen-year-old, and a curly-haired blond seventeen-year-old—as they take turns grunting under the burden of their old man's barbell.

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It occurs to me that if either of these teenage Mailer kids would venture forth from the fort they might strike up a friendship with my own two teenage kids who at this very moment are flinging a frisbee back and forth on the beach in front of their house. Perhaps it is not quite enough to say that this notion occurs to me; it is a sudden obsession. I feel like going up on the verandah and driving those kids down with a stick. But, then, as the full realization of what is going through my mind strikes me, I am filled with a sense of shame and self-loathing; to be so base as to think of using one's own children as a way of getting to some other children's parent. I am so ashamed of myself that I take off at a brisk pace down the beach alone, as if by walking away from the scene of my thoughts I can somehow escape from my own abhorrent nature.

Using my own children. In what way am I so different, say, from the father in the family taken in by Otto Frank who held back food from his own children in order to hog more for himself? There is enough similarity, at least, for the association to present itself. In similar circumstances, would I have stolen food from my own children? No! And yet, have I not been known to slide the tough tail of porterhouse onto my children's plates while reserving the fillet for myself? What kind of monster am I, trying to sneak a peek at the bare breasts of girls sunbathing, and stealing food from my own children's mouths?

It has grown late in the afternoon. The tide has risen, and with it a breeze has come up, spraying whitecaps across the bay. The sun at this time of day is low, but still hangs above the horizon, casting a pink glow over everything and gleaming golden off the hulls of the little boats anchored out in the bay. I turn back from my walk, and head toward home. I do not look up as I pass under the deck belonging to the topless girls. Nor do I so much as glance at the teenage boys on the verandah of the gray shingled house as I make my way from the beach toward our white cottage.

Inside, the kids are sitting about listlessly in the living room, still in their damp bathing suits, their sandy feet up on a coffee table. Their mother is coming out of the bathroom with only a towel wrapped around her, hair damp and stringy, and feet leaving wet prints on the wide floor planking of the old house.

"Anybody want to go out for dinner?" I say.

"Yay-y-y!" That's the kids, coming to life. "Can we have lobster?"

I look at my wife. There's suddenly a new brightness in her eyes. She was hoping we'd go out, I guess.

Day Six

HE-E-E-E-E-ERE's Norman! In the flesh. I am filling the garbage cans out by the street in front of our cottage when I look up to see him, along with his mother, his wife, the two teenage boys, and the little two-year-old, all coming down the brick walk in front of their house. Norman holds the hand of the little fellow, and it strikes me that he is so short he hardly has to bend over. The two of them lead, the others following, like a line of geese waddling behind the gander. Norman's wife helps his mother, guiding her by the arm and elbow.

I fool around with the garbage as long as possible, stuffing the smelly bags inside, one of them bursting and squirting some abominable juice on my sleeve, and banging the rusty tin covers in place, with the vague hope that he will notice me, and say something. Like, "I understand we're both writers," or, if that's too much to expect, "Why don't you come by for cocktails on the verandah tomorrow and we can talk about Marilyn Monroe and the circumstances surrounding her death?"

His eyes, however, are fastened on the little fellow. The whole family's eyes are fastened on one or another of themselves. I can only bang the garbage lids for a certain period without appearing foolish, and so I retreat, walking backward, disappearing through the gate to our cottage where, just inside, I stumble over an inflated rubber inner tube and land on my backside behind the privet hedge that is as tall as a tall man's head. Swinging around on my stomach and leaning on my elbows, I take up a position peering through the greenery to see where they are going. Norman slides in behind the wheel of the BMW; the most successful writer in America, looking at the moment like somebody's father from the Bronx, taking Saturday afternoon off from his auto-parts store to drive the family all the way around Manhattan and through Brooklyn to Coney Island for a shore dinner. That's what he looks like. They are going for clams somewhere in Provincetown. Grandma, no thanks, will have chicken. The boys will have pizzas. The little fellow will share with Mommy.

Where has he been keeping himself for the first five days? He must have arrived silently by parachute in the middle of last night. Or perhaps he has been here all along, up in his room working, *not* looking down at the topless girls. Doing what I should be doing, which if I were to do it I would be as famous as he. Putting my ass into a chair, and banging on the old Selectric.

As a matter of fact, I brought the Selectric with me, as I have every year for the past five. And have never written a word on it up here; at least, not a word of fiction. Or of playscript dialogue. Sure, I have written a couple of letters. To my commercial clients, on my phony business stationery, to let them know that even though I am on vacation I have their interests very much in mind and am not having any more fun than they are

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back in their offices poring over their computer print-out sales tables and spread sheets and wishing they were leading the kind of wild, free life that they imagine I lead. I know how they think. They say little things when I call on them to pick up the folders of dictated memos and odds and ends of incomplete notions and concepts that they give to me to transform into crisply worded optimistic annual reports printed in four colors on glossy 100-lb-weight paper. Little things like, "I called you yesterday, but I got the answering machine and hung up. I guess you were out playing tennis." In point of fact, I probably *was* out playing tennis when they called. Yes, having sneaked out for a couple of hours to hit with my wife on the cement courts behind the junior high school that are cracked and make the ball bounce in unpredictable ways. I've made jokes to my commercial clients about the sorry condition of these courts. But they don't believe me, that I play on cracked concrete. They see me playing on manicured grass, observed by ladies in long dresses wearing white gloves and holding parasols.

People have strange notions about other people. My clients don't know me. I am not better off than they are. I play more tennis perhaps. But I think I worry more. About whether or not they will fire me, for example. And all of this I am thinking while lying on my stomach behind the privet hedge as Norman guides the BMW out of the parking place and down the street for a shore dinner.

Day Seven

RAIN. No tennis or beach today. Because the kids are stuck in the house and bored, they want me to play Monopoly with them. Which I do not want to do. Still, I consider it. My son is fifteen. He will be going to boarding school in September. Only a few weeks from now. For the first time since he was born he will not be in the house with us this fall. And we will miss him. His presence around us is as familiar and as somehow reassuring as the sun in the morning rising over the trees in back of our house.

It is not just a snobbish notion of ours, to send our son to boarding school. He has not done well scholastically this past year in the public junior high school (the one in front of the tennis courts). His free time in the afternoons tends to be spent stunt-riding his bicycle in the local supermarket parking lot, where youngsters only a year or two older, boys and girls in no way intrinsically either better or worse than he, idle about in pick-up trucks and on motorcycles, drinking beer and acting rowdy. Rumors are rife of drugs changing hands, and even though my son denies any knowledge of drug use, we feel it is crucial now to send him away to another place, where it is said they provide a positive environment and possibly the expertise that will turn him on to some of life's more magical possibilities.

How I will pay for this magic is a trick in itself. I simply do not earn enough to carry it off. Still, by hook or crook, we will do it, at least for this first year, anyway. Then, next year, when my son transforms himself into the school's most indispensable student, he will get the full scholarship that will enable him to continue.

In seven weeks he will be gone, pretty much forever, if you think about it. Though he was born, if memory serves, only yesterday. I am so proud to be able to send him away to school, and I will miss him terribly.

So I agree to play that loathsome game of Monopoly. Which I win. And which makes everybody in the house mad at me.

Day Eight

THE sun is out again, the sky a deep clear blue. The storm has washed the palette clean. And with the renewed burst of sunshine suddenly swarms of adults venture forth onto the verandah of the gray shingled house across the street. It is as if a fire had been set in an anthill. Friends and, I assume, relatives stream out, spill down onto the beach, make their way to the water. Boats materialize. Sails are rigged, heavy Evinrude motors attached to speedboats.

Norman's fifteen-year-old has collected a gang of pals, four other boys, and assembled them down on the beach. The tide is out, exposing a flat expanse littered with bits of broken glass and beer cans. With their heels they gouge out a square in the wet sand to demarcate the outline of a boxing ring. They have two pairs of red boxing gloves which they take turns with, two at a time, sparring, circling, and jabbing, while the others stand by, offering advice, kidding around, laughing, pushing one another.

I am sitting higher up on the beach, on the hot dry sand near the rocks of our jetty, watching my own son and daughter who at the moment are bobbing about in the water on rubber rafts, farther out.

It occurs to me, sitting beside my wife on the blanket, that only Norman is missing from today's tableau. And perhaps therein lies the secret of his success. While others idle and frolic in the sun, Norman is busy completing the work at hand. No self-indulgent dip in the bay for him. No lazy walk down the beach looking for sand-blasted glass to paste later onto a lamp base for the family room. No entertaining of transient in-laws and visiting friends. No tossing a frisbee with the kids on the beach.

As I turn these thoughts over in my mind, I find myself experiencing in small measure a feeling of moral superiority over my famous neighbor.

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It is a feeling that is somehow reassuring, and I cannot help coddling it a little bit as I drop my head down on the blanket for a little snooze.

Perhaps because of the continuing wash of contentment I do not bother to open my eyes to see who it is whose feet a moment later are treading through the sand within a dozen inches or so of my prone body.

"There's Norman," my wife says casually. His presence does not stir up such feelings of awe within her as it does in me. Much to my annoyance. It is demeaning to be obsessed alone.

He is in his bathing suit, an elastic form-fitting black brief, in contrast to my own powder blue loose-fitting boxer shorts. His chest and stomach are enormous, protruding in front of him like the hood on a Volkswagen Beetle. He joins his son and the kids at the boxing ring, who stop what they are doing at his approach and form a respectful semicircle in front of him.

An alarm seems to ring in my head. What is he doing? He is talking to the kids. I can hear the braying voice, although I cannot make out the words. As I stand up from the blanket, the moral ground beneath me seems to be falling away precipitously.

"What are you doing?" my wife asks.

"Nothing." I leave her, heading down to the wet flatlands, slipping over toward the boxing group, in a sidewise manner, sneakily, like a desert sidewinder. Norman, fists up to his ears, his compact hairy body bobbing up and down on bandy legs, is showing the kids how to cover up. He doesn't throw any punches. The kids put their own fists up to their ears, the lessons of a more experienced generation going down to the next.

After a time, Norman drops his hands, makes a few final comments, gives a small wave of the fingers to the kids, and moves farther on out to the water. He is going to swim. The kids go back to their boxing, their fists up a bit higher than before, around their ears.

Back on the dry sand my wife is sitting up, looking out in my direction. Why is she staring at me with this sudden look of concern? If you wanted her to look at you, *needed* her to, if you were *drowning*, for God's sake, she'd probably be *sleeping*. I stand alone under the harsh sun on the wet sand flat, looking around, seeing nothing. I don't feel like moving. I will move after a while. If nothing else, the tide will come in.

Day Nine

WHAT is all this nonsense about? Why this obsession with Norman Mailer? Eight days of vacation have gone by already, and it seems as though it hasn't started yet. I keep deferring my vacation because I am waiting for something to happen that even in the midst of my craziness I know cannot possibly matter all that much. My life has nothing to do in any profound way with Norman Mailer. Undeniably, he leads a kind of outsized existence that is enviable. His books and articles have been a source of interest and pleasure to me. Yet it is questionable whether either his life or his writing has influenced me in any large way. Certainly not to the extent that Hemingway influenced me when I was in college. Or Fitzgerald. Or even poor Thomas Wolfe whom everybody now disparages. Or, earlier, Dreiser. Edgar Lee Masters! Currently unfashionable Sinclair Lewis. Dos Passos before he went sour. Writers as different as the different faces and different manners in any American crowd, but all with one magical trait in common, the ability to reach into a young man, grab forcefully by the fist a handful of gut and drag him out into life and send him off to change the world. In my case, to Europe, first, then into a grittier world of labor organizing, then into newspapers and reporting, and finally into a stop-and-go intermittent effort to write plays for the stage. None of it turned out, not in any grand way. Not in any way that Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Dos Passos would have had in mind. I did not set new patterns of style in continental living in Europe, nor did I succeed in toppling capitalism with the electrical workers in Brooklyn, nor change the face of journalism at the United Press in New York, nor storm successfully the bastions of Broadway theater.

It is not really Norman Mailer that I am obsessed with. It is an obsession with time passing and unfulfilled dreams. It has all gone by, like this vacation, while I have been desperately wanting to do something more with my life.

Yes, I have the common sense to know that were I to stand on that bayside verandah across the street in consort with my rich and famous neighbor, colleague, Norman Mailer, it would have no especial substantive importance, it would change nothing. And yet, at the same time, the image has the force right now of a whole life's vindication.

I am lying in bed, thinking these thoughts. The house across the street is dark, as is ours. Another day has gone by.

Day Ten

WE WILL be leaving in three days. I am escorting my wife out to dinner, just the two of us, a ritual ceremony that we find time for every year at least once before returning home. We have given the kids money for cheeseburgers, French fries, and milkshakes at some sleaze joint downtown, this being for them perhaps the high-point adventure of the entire two-week vacation, while we, with not a penny left between us, will dine over water on an enclosed pier, squandering credit proffered by the American Express Company. We will have cocktails and a bottle of wine, and attempt to rekindle as much as possible of the enchantment

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we experienced twenty-five years ago when for the first time we discovered this sandbar town sticking out 75 miles into the Atlantic Ocean, and first realized, indeed in this very restaurant, that we were in love.

But, of course, once we're seated, the sought-after mood does not come. The red and green storm lanterns on the tables and the lobster pots and nets hanging from the walls fail to conjure up a romantic aura this evening. A dogged glumness has descended over me, and the forced hollowness of an effort at cheerful chatter serves only to highlight my increasingly apparent and growing despair.

If it is a mood that I have felt tugging at me with particular urgency during the past few days, I am aware of it also as an undercurrent that has been gathering force in my life for as far back as a year, perhaps longer. It is the mid-life passage they talk about, coming rather later in my life, I think, than in most, and perhaps because of that, coming on very fast suddenly, with augmented force. And with menace.

I had hoped that over the period of the annual pilgrimage this year things might sort themselves out, that what I had perceived as the gathering burden of increasing disappointment in my life might simply have been exaggerated out of proportion and that in the course of coming here and replenishing myself, as one does on vacation, it might fall away, as the burdens always have fallen away in past years, for twenty-five, so that I might go back this year restored, to do battle one more time.

But it is clear that I am not restored. Nor am I replenished.

When we have finished dinner my wife does not order coffee, declining to accept a brew inferior to the French roast she makes at home. So I gulp mine, tasting the bitterness and not caring, and not bothering to sweeten it. She is right. The coffee is terrible. I pay with the American Express card, and we leave.

It is too early to go home. The kids will still be up, chasing each other around the cottage, shrieking. At least they like each other. My son will go away, and my daughter will actually miss him, we think, perhaps as much as we will. And then she will go away, in another year. And we will be left with each other. Until the first one of us goes. And then the other.

Without any of this being said, it nevertheless insinuates itself into our evening, this somber mood, as my wife and I walk the gray fog-drenched and narrow streets of the quiet end of Provincetown, before going home. Neither of us talks now, but there is something chilling that has arisen between us, and it is more than an effect of the night air. I can sense within her a resentment stiffening against me, and I believe I know her well enough to come close to understanding what it is that is bothering her. It is the constant dragging down of her life, in favor of mine, and she is just tired of it. I owe her more, and particularly so on this particular special night. I have not been thinking much of her own mid-life passage of late, of her own moods of despair and compensatory needs.

It is, therefore, not completely a surprise when seemingly out of nowhere suddenly she demands, "When was the last time you looked at me?" Her head is straight ahead, her neck hunched into her shoulders, chin in, cushioned in the little roll of flesh that has been gathering prominence there for the past several years.

"What?" This is an effort on my part to slow things down. Her question is not an idle one. There is the energy of attack within it, and I do not want to say anything to offend; rather, if possible, to find a way to blunt the angry edge of it. She is not talking about just looking. She has in mind the nude body, the sweet lusting after it, of being taken into strong arms and hugged against the hard outlines of the male.

"You'd rather look at the girls next door," she says.

"I haven't been *looking*. They parade around. For *Mailer,* for God's sake!"

"Eat your heart out," she throws in bitterly.

"Please! Can we talk about something else?"

She presses on. "You always want what you don't have."

"Maybe I do." I shrug this off. "I don't know. Is that so abnormal?"

Quietly she says, "It is if you end up hating yourself and everything you have."

"I don't hate myself! And everything I have." It is a terrible accusation. And yet, there is no fooling her. I think it is possible that it is the crucial core problem, I really *do* hate myself. Certainly at this moment I do. And, what is worse, it occurs to me in a horrible moment, except on a few rare occasions perhaps I have always hated myself. To one degree or another. A whole lifetime spent looking enviously at others. Or, what is pretty much the same thing, wanting them to look enviously at me. And only in moments of anticipation of some vague occurrence that might transport me above the common level of things has there been some temporary mitigation.

And now. I sense there is to be no major transporting. I have never sensed it more keenly than during this past week. I am face to face with this awful truth that I have been resisting for so many months: I am what I am, and will never be more.

"You are missing out on everything you have," my wife says, "because you are so worried about what you do not have."

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Surprisingly, this last is said without anger, the bitterness of just a moment before having spent itself, as though lost all of a sudden on a wisp of breath on the night air. It is concern now that I detect in her voice. And rightly so. There is reason for concern. Because she is right.

"You have so much," she says, "and you are so unhappy."

We continue walking the damp chilly streets, brushing now and then against the dewy hedges that crowd the narrow sidewalks. I know that if I didn't have her I would die. She has unburdened herself of this heavy load, which is my load, really, and one that is, finally, better left behind. In an instant I slip my arm around her waist, drawing her in to me. We stop walking. Her body turns to face mine on the fulcrum of my arm. Like someone grasping for life itself, suddenly I reach my other arm clumsily around the other side of her, and draw her to me. Her face is up. In the light of a street lamp breaking through overhanging leaves, it looks small, somewhat aghast and white. I bend down to her, the two cool sets of lips touch and mesh and find instant warmth.

There's our romantic evening! The enchantment returns. Only in freaky P-Town, two old-timers going at each other in the middle of the street, like a couple of sex fiends.

Day Eleven

I AM DETERMINED, finally, to take advantage of the continuing lovely weather, and make the most of what remains of our short vacation. This afternoon I find myself on the beach in my blue boxer trunks with diving mask, snorkel tube, and fishing spear in hand, preparatory to sallying forth into the shallow waters of the bay to try my luck at bringing home a flounder. The spearfishing equipment is my son's, which he has used a couple of times during our vacation, but with no success. Since I am conscious of my role as principal provider for the family, I have announced to the accompaniment of what I consider to be some quite unnecessary hooting and jeering that I will go forth, and bring back a seafood dinner for all.

The mask is a tight fit. I have to remove my eyeglasses to put it on, which renders me more or less helpless on land, but since there seems to be some magnification under water I know I will be able to see well enough while snorkeling to spear any gray or white circular object below me that might be a flounder. If it turns out to be, instead, the sole of a sneaker or a cracked and abandoned toilet-seat cover, I have found from past experience that it doesn't hurt anything. You simply pull it up and discard it quickly before anybody has a chance to see.

A good place to sequester my eyeglasses, I decide, is under the steps of our right-of-way, and as I bend over from the waist to tuck them away safely in a bath towel, who should suddenly be descending to the beach on Mailer's adjacent stairway but Mailer himself. He passes, in fact, close by my upturned rump, so there is no opportunity for eye contact, though there wouldn't have been any in any case because my glasses are off and wrapped up in the towel. However, I am able to follow his form as he makes his way toward the water in his tight black elastic bathing suit. To my surprise, I descry a snorkeling tube and mask, not unlike my own, canted up on his forehead.

I plough out into waist-high water and slip my mask over my eyes. Though I am mindful of Mailer's fuzzy presence some 50 yards or so away, the focus of my concentration now is turned toward the bottom of the bay where I hope to catch me a toilet seat. During the past twelve hours or so I have accommodated to the likely realization that I will never meet Norman Mailer. I lower my face into the water, accustoming myself cautiously to breathing through the snorkel pipe.

The sense of things below the surface is strangely eerie, made more so by the absence of all sound except for a hollow rushing in the ears, and the unexpected and alarming sight of semi-submerged gobs of seaweed drifting by like creatures from the outer reef. The current is strong. I can feel it pulling me along parallel to the shore, even in the direction where I last saw Mailer. It occurs to me that it would be hell if the lower submerged half of his magnified white body suddenly loomed up ahead of me and I were to panic and spear him. I allow my feet to drop to the bottom so as to stand and take a directional look. I have been floating perhaps fifteen minutes, no more. I lift the mask, and find myself somewhere in the vicinity of the spot where I last saw him. I squint 100 yards away in every direction, but he is nowhere in sight. A thrill courses through me. It must be that he is floating half-drowned nearby, and it is my destiny to fish him out and save his life. Writer saves writer. Will I have to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation? The possibilities are almost more than I can bear.

But he is nowhere to be found. Either he has been swallowed up by a shark, or what is more likely, he has gone back to shore (having allowed himself the briefest of refreshing dips before going on to a new chapter of his novel). I am ready, too, to head toward shore, to abandon the quest for the mythical flounder.

As I drag myself up onto the dry sand and slouch past my jeering children (because I have no fish), I look up to see Mailer on his verandah, toweling off, his back to me. It occurs to me that if I hurled the spear just right I could catch him now. Pin him to the deck and shout in his face, "Listen, you son of a bitch, what is your feeling

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about the direction of modern American literature?"

I put the spear and mask under the steps and return my glasses to my nose. As I straighten and look up, suddenly Mailer turns, and our eyes meet. We are standing about ten feet apart, a snorkel dangling from each of our hands, like slingshots.

"See anything out there?" I find myself asking. Under the circumstances it seems like a reasonable question.

"Naw," he answers. "A few crabs."

"I can't see a hell of a lot with my glasses off, anyway," I say. This may be the literary conversation of the century.

He grins, acknowledging some humor in the mild self-deprecation. "When the tide gets all the way up, try out by those little buoys out there," he says. "A lot of fish come in and swim around there."

"I'd like to get one for dinner. Show off for the kids."

He is grinning now. I'm a regular comic. I'm breaking the guy up.

"Try out by the buoys," he says.

"I will. Thanks." Thanks for the memory, too. Norm, neighbor.

"What'd you say, Dad?" my son asks, as I walk over to the blanket and join him. I like that. He asks me what *I* said. Not what Norman said.

"Aw, we were just talking about spearfishing. He says there are a lot of fish out by the buoys when the tide comes in."

"*I* told you that already."

"Oh, right. I know. Well, what'd you want me to do, tell him I knew that already?"

We both laugh. Boy, wait'll they see the smile on that kid of mine at that school I'm sending him to.

Day Twelve

OUR next to last day before leaving, and it rains the whole day. Therefore, a good opportunity to get ready for tomorrow's departure. There's plenty of work to be done by everyone, sweeping sand from the floors, cleaning out the bathroom, collecting the loose odds and ends of things—the charcoal grill, plastic pails, rubber raft, and inner tubes, and, not to forget, the trusty Selectric. All piled by the door in the front room for transfer and arrangement tomorrow inside the back of the big Pontiac station wagon.

The rain ends after supper, leaving a fog that gives indication of clearing soon and blowing out to sea. It is our last night, my last chance to look over the black waters of the bay with the lights of the lower Cape faint in the distance and the lighthouse on the tip of the horn sending out its warning beam to ships navigating in the fog.

Alone, I cross the street barefoot, making my way in the dark along the narrow right-of-way to spend a few moments on the beach. It has been a strange period for me during the past two weeks, and I do not know as yet what to think of it all. The tide is out and there is a heavy funky smell of rot and brine on the moist air, rich and organic, suggestive somehow of the twin processes of growth and decay. I stand close enough at the water's edge to allow the light surf to wash up and over my feet. In the distance the green and red running lights of several small ships move cautiously across the black horizon, the sound of their foghorns heard faintly, bleating. Overhead a star appears through an opening in the mist. Then another. It is a special moment. I savor it, as I have savored similar moments here in years past.

Behind me, the gray shingled house is dark, buttoned up against the night, early, as usual. Turning to gaze at it for a moment my attention is drawn, instead, beyond it to our own cottage across the street, every light in every room ablaze, the electric meter whirring wastefully and racking up dollars and cents for the electric company. I don't care. I think I prefer it that way. The blazing lights beckon. It is my home, even though the house is rented, and only temporarily.

When I burst in through the front door a few moments later I startle everyone.

"Here I am! I'm home!" I announce in a loud and hoarse voice. And even as I say it I have already the sensation of my cheeks reddening as they meet the warmth of the room.

Everybody looks up at me as though I am crazy.

Day Thirteen

WE ARE LEAVING. Yesterday's storm is far out to sea now. It is a beautiful sunny day, but with a touch of coolness in the air. We arrived in the heart of muggy summer, and two weeks later the draft of another autumn is felt over the land.

The kids, in shorts and shirts now for traveling, run over to the beach for a last look before we leave. Soon they are back with a report that all three of the girls next door to Norman's are parading around their deck bare-breasted, and Norman himself is out on the sand flats sparring with his fifteen-year-old.

The bare-breasted girls are parading around, of course, so that Norman will be able to see them clearly from below without his binoculars. There is a moment when I toy with the idea of rushing out to the beach, for a last swim, perhaps even to stroll by Norman and favor him with a big sunny morning smile. Now that we know each other.

I put it out of mind. There is the stuff to porter to the car, and it's getting late. We want to be

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out of the house right after lunch. True, I wouldn't mind another peek at the girls, but too much of the same thing takes the mystery out, too. I put everyone to work, loading our gear. Last to go are the bicycles, roped on top of the luggage rack.

We eat lunch on paper plates and deposit our garbage in the cans out in front of the cottage. The house looks stripped, forlorn, as I glance around for the last time before locking the door behind me, depositing the key, as instructed by the landlord, in the mailbox where any thief with half a brain will look first and find it.

We slip out of P-Town, taking the Shore Road through North Truro that runs parallel to the bay for a couple of miles before joining the four-lane Route 6, heading to the lower Cape.

"Take a last look," I say to the kids. The blue sky and water of the bay are on the right, and the huge expanse of creamy sand dunes of Cape Cod holding back the Atlantic Ocean is on the left. The kids peer briefly out the rear window panel, but already their minds are moving ahead to their lives back home. Their friends will be there, having returned from their own vacations. School will be starting up soon. The vacation has restored them. They will sleep on the way home.

And my wife, brown and beautiful beside me in the front seat, in a red blouse, the wind blowing her hair in every direction. She is wearing white shorts, and one leg is tucked under her on the seat, the sole of her bare foot touching the inner thigh of the other leg, and the sun coming through the windshield and brightening her lap. It is the way she used to sit in the car when I first knew her, when she was a girl, almost a quarter-century ago.

I turn to her. "Sorry to be going home?"

"I'm ready," she says. Her expression is serene. "How about you?"

I nod agreeably.

"You got to talk to Norman," she says.

"Yeah, he's not a bad egg." And I turn onto the four-lane Route 6, putting the accelerator for an instant to the floor, and experiencing for a moment a young man's feeling of power surging under me again.

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"There Go Our Little Jews"

David G. Roskies

On January 7 of this year, Christmas day in the Eastern Orthodox calendar, a group of young Evangelicals dressed in native Ukrainian costume gave a spirited performance of religious folk songs right under Lenin's stony gaze in the Plaza of the October Revolution in Kiev. The crowd assembled there was clearly enjoying the first public performance of these carols in over sixty years. Here, in the City of a Thousand Churches, where only a dozen or so actually serve the faithful, Ukrainian nationalists were finally, if tentatively, reclaiming their Christian roots.

The young Ukrainian Jews who accompanied me on that day seemed to take it all in stride because their culture too was enjoying a remarkable efflorescence, and the signs of Ukrainian-Jewish brotherhood were everywhere to be seen. Thus, in Moscow only two weeks before, when the delegates to the first All-Russian Conference of Jewish Organizations emerged from their deliberations, there to protect them from the anti-Semitic heckling and banners of the Pamyat movement was a group of Ukrainian nationalists with their distinctive yellow-and-blue armbands. They had traveled all the way from Lvov to forge this human chain of ethnic solidarity.

My own presence in Kiev was testimony to the Ukrainian government's genuine desire to foster a Jewish cultural revival. Under the auspices of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education, I and Peysakh Fiszman had been invited from the United States to lead a two-week-long seminar for the training of Yiddish teachers. While the New York-based Committee for the Revitalization of Yiddish and Yiddish Culture in the Soviet Union had paid our plane fares, and while our local accommodations (spartan, to be sure) were being provided by the spanking new Republican Society for Jewish Culture, the 38 officially registered participants could expect the Ministry of Education itself to reimburse their travel and living expenses. Nothing like this had occurred in the Ukraine, or in the entire USSR for that matter, since 1939.

Another first was the official opening of the Osher Shvartsman Library in Kiev. The few thousand Jewish books in Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, Hebrew, and English that formed the nucleus of this fledgling collection would soon be greatly augmented by private donations once word got around of the library's existence. Meanwhile, the sixty-odd people crammed into the tiny auditorium on the seventh night of Hanukkah thrilled to the lighting of the candles, courtesy of their guests from America. Though none of the assembled local Jews responded "Amen" to the blessings, it was surely out of ignorance, not hostility. For when later I distributed *dreydlekh*, the miniature tops used in holiday games, as well as chocolate Hanukkah *gelt* and even Simhat Torah flags to the children of the Pintelekh Choir who had just performed for us, the adults in the audience broke with official decorum to beg gifts for their own children and grandchildren.

Our hosts were drunk on *glasnost*. Besides the government-sponsored seminar and library; besides the theatrical ensembles from Moscow and the successful season enjoyed by the Kiev Yiddish Theater, Mazel Tov; besides the spate of recent concerts by Shlomo Carlebach and members of the Israel Philharmonic; besides the ambitious plans for new seminars, new books and periodicals, there was also a wealth of unofficial activities: Hebrew courses galore, Jewish *samizdat* in Russian, Ukrainian, Yiddish, and even—I saw it with my own eyes—the opening of an Israeli video library.

Predictably, this feverish activity above and below ground was accompanied by fierce infighting. Indeed, seventy years of Bolshevik terror had done little to alter the structure of internal Jewish politics. On the Zionist end of the spectrum, the *Iggud Hamorim*, or Union of Hebrew Teachers, had split into rival factions. In the meantime, a breakaway group from the Republican Society for Jewish Culture—a kind of latter-day Bund committed to cultural autonomy—had just been formed the week before we arrived. The elite group of young Zionists preferred to go it alone, and seemed to enjoy the romance of semi-clandestine

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meetings. In addition, they now had an unbroken supply of funds, electronic equipment, and accessories which were the envy of the "Republicans." The latter, for all their official sanction and much larger membership, had to rely on Ukrainian institutions that were also starving for a ruble.

Contributing to a profound sense of *déjà-vu* was a gallery of Jewish activists who seemed to be recruited from central casting. The Republican Society for Jewish Culture, for instance, was headed by an old-guard bureaucrat named Ilya Levitas who looked very Stalinist indeed. Lean and muscular (he is a former gym instructor), Levitas never cracked a smile. He also could not speak Yiddish. Opinions on the man were wildly divergent. Some painted him as a *Judenrat*-style collaborator out to further only himself and his group of sycophants. Others argued that he alone had the contacts and political savvy to organize a common Jewish-Ukrainian front. It was a measure of *glasnost,* however, that no one was afraid of him. The students of our seminar let him have it for the terrible accommodations and other indignities they suffered.

A more lovable type was Igor Kuperberg, who ran the day-to-day activities of the Society. He was one of the few middle-aged men active in Jewish politics, though his bad eye and paunch belly made his exact age inscrutable. Kuperberg took his marching orders from Levitas, yet he was thick with the Zionists as well. They, in turn, were young and handsome with fiery eyes and healthy heads of hair. The bearded ones betrayed a religious leaning. In addition to their sex appeal, the Zionists also boasted a membership half of whom were young women, a constituency sorely lacking among their rivals. The "Republicans" were mostly pensioners: archetypal Jewish mothers; fathers who always displayed their war ribbons and medals; Holocaust survivors.

But no matter who they were, young or old, male or female, they talked and talked and talked. Never have I so understood the loquaciousness of Sholem Aleichem's fictional characters. Talkativeness here in Kiev was a surrogate for political power, for happiness, for the truth. Some of the monologues were in fact so close to Sholem Aleichem that the boundary between literature and life broke down completely. A father from Odessa recounted the Via Dolorosa of his son from one institution of higher learning to another, as each time the son was rejected on account of his Jewish name, his Jewish pride, his Jewish brain. It was Sholem Aleichem's story "Gymnasium" almost to the word. More tragic still was when a daughter recounted the trials of her father, a purged Yiddish writer. "I saw everything," she said: how a whole housing complex of Yiddish writers, journalists, and scholars was arrested one by one—the good, the bad, and the indifferent.

The loss of her father meant the loss of his language, too. Though she sat in on our seminar from 10:00 to 4:00 every day, she could not read, write, or speak Yiddish. Otherwise, the spoken Yiddish of our informants was just a bit more corrupt than the recorded monologues in Sholem Aleichem's *Railroad Stories.* But the pent-up energy of their speech, not to mention their self-deprecating humor, more than compensated for the mishmash of languages. Hardly a story could be told without circling back to a joke, either political or anti-Semitic, or both.

Of all the hundreds of Yiddish writers who once made Kiev their home, Sholem Aleichem is the only one still enshrined, and only his repertoire is still performed. The hottest tickets in town were for the Ukrainian production of *Tevye,* a polished three-and-a-half hour performance that borrowed heavily from *Fiddler on the Roof* but thoroughly exploited the native Ukrainian setting. In this version, Pertchik the revolutionary is caught waving the red flag through the streets of neighboring Kiev (the audience laughed appreciatively). That the Jews are an integral part of the Ukrainian landscape was the message driven home in almost every scene. A more lovable *uryadnik,* or Ukrainian village policeman, could hardly be imagined. Unwilling accomplice of the czar, this cop passes Tevye some extra pocket money for the long road of exile ahead. As if that were not brotherhood enough, a new character, Stepan the *Shabbes-goy,* had been invented to exemplify the indivisible bond between the peasants and the Jews.

However idealized, the relevance of *Tevye* to the present situation of Jews in the Ukraine cannot be overstated. The work deals with the subject that was on everybody's mind: the Jews of Anatevke and Kiev and Moscow and Leningrad and Tashkent are leaving, this time in the absence of a ukase from the czar. But the full propaganda point of the play became apparent at the end when Fedor, the Ukrainian intellectual, joins his beloved Chava in exile and Tevye is fully reconciled both to a *goy* for a son-in-law and an apostate for a daughter. The couple's immediate destination is Berdichev, the trading capital of the Ukraine. Only Leyzer-Volf the corpulent butcher sets out for America, awkwardly uttering his first English word, "Goodbye."

Sholem Aleichem's enduring popularity among all sectors of the Ukrainian population provides an accurate measure of how much and how little historical awareness has weathered the Soviet campaign of cultural genocide. Across from the equestrian statue of Bogdan Chmielnitsky, the notorious 17th-century pogromist, is the building where the infamous blood-libel trial of Mendel Beilis took place in 1913. Yet when the Kiev Yiddish Theater drew up a full-color poster for its latest production, Sholem Aleichem's *It's Hard to Be a Jew,* which is loosely based on the events of the trial, the local censor expunged from the upper-

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left-hand corner a representation of the Chmielnitsky statue. There has not been nor will there ever be a moral reckoning for the Jewish blood spilled by Ukrainian hands.

The memorial plaque to Sholem Aleichem at 27 Saksanovska Street was the only official sign I could find that Jews had ever lived, worked, and died in this ancient capital. The one remaining synagogue, in the historic Podol district of town, did not appear in any guidebook. To be sure, every Soviet Jew knows much more than the official publications allow, but local memory alone cannot compensate for the systematic destruction of Jewish nationhood and Jewish faith. My Jewish activist friends took pride in pointing out the sculpture of Samson fighting the lion, now restored in the center of Podol. Ukrainian wags, they hastened to add, call it "The *Zhid* [Kike] Torturing the Dog."

Since my friends had never studied the Bible, none knew much about another biblical hero named Elijah the Prophet. Never having attended a Passover seder, either, they did not know that Elijah is supposed to taste of the wine set aside for him in a special cup. One who did remember the custom of opening the door for Elijah was thirty-four-year-old Boris (Boruch) Kimelfeld. He had played the rabbi in *It's Hard to Be a Jew,* the climactic scene of which takes place at the seder table. Never could Sholem Aleichem have imagined that some day in the Ukraine his writings would be the sole preserve of the world's first monotheistic religion.

In 1971, during my first trip to the Soviet Union, I had met a very different element, for then to be a Soviet Jewish activist meant forfeiting one's job and sometimes even one's freedom. It took a great deal of daring for Esther Markish to greet Westerners in front of the Arkhipova Street synagogue in Moscow or to invite them to lecture at her home. Lev Navrozov would tell visitors in perfect English that since the life of a Soviet Jew began anew from the day he applied for a visa, he himself was at that time no more than a babe in arms. The remarkable Ilya Essas, meanwhile, pumped the Jewish tourist for precise information on the difference between Moses Hess and Leo Pinsker, *Midstream* and COMMENTARY.

That pioneering group of fearless, urbane Jews had long since emigrated and new generations had also followed suit. But here in the Ukraine, off the beaten track, and in the third year of *perestroika,* it was *amkha,* ordinary Jews, ranging in age from eighteen to eighty, who attended the Yiddish Teachers' Seminar. There was not one among them whose Jewish learning and sophistication were even remotely on a par with their general training. While the younger students could barely read or write Yiddish, the older ones had all attended Soviet Yiddish schools. But since the last of these were closed down in 1939 and the purge of Soviet Yiddish culture was completed by 1952, even the native Yiddish speakers had had little access to the mother tongue for almost half a century. I was astonished by how much they still remembered. I was heartsick at how much they had never learned.

To be sure, I had often read the Communist slogan, "national in form, cosmopolitan in content." But what I had never fully understood was that under the guise of creating a proletarian Yiddish culture, the Jewish Communists had produced two generations of functional illiterates. They had produced someone who could still recite, in Yiddish, Newton's law of universal gravitation, but who had never read of God's covenant with Abraham. How diabolically clever it had been to introduce a new spelling system as well, one that rendered all the Hebraisms in Yiddish phonetically and abolished the "superfluous" letters: the *vet,* the *het,* the *sin,* and the *taf.* As a result, Soviet Jews cannot decipher the simplest non-Soviet text. They cannot even recognize Sholem Aleichem's name in its standard (Hebraic) spelling. After two weeks of constant drilling, Fiszman and I had barely brought our students' fear of Hebraisms under control. And even so, once they made out the words there was no guarantee they understood them.

It was painful to watch the older students—whose life for socialism lay behind them and whose life for Judaism would hardly be lived—as they discovered that they had been duped. It was so late in the game to savor the writings of the "bourgeois reactionaries," all mention of whom had been expunged: to hear, for the first time, about the poet-playwright-ethnographer S. Ansky, who fled the Bolsheviks in 1918; to read, for the first time, the poetry of Moyshe-Leyb Halpern, blacklisted by *American* Jewish Communists as early as 1926; to sing, for the first time, the ballads of Itsik Manger, written only a few hundred kilometers away, in Poland. So too were they belatedly exposed to the ghetto poems of Abraham Sutzkever that told of a life-and-death struggle they knew nothing about.

Who had compiled the blacklist? It is easy to blame the faceless shock troups of the *Yevsektsia,* the Jewish section of the Communist party. It is harder to face the truth, as Esther Rosenthal-Schneiderman recently did in an extraordinary jeremiad for Soviet Yiddish culture: it was the Soviet Jewish intelligentsia itself that was guilty of the crime. With breathtaking candor, she included herself as one of the willing accomplices.

To wean the Jewish masses away from the Zionist vision of the future, the Communists offered them Birobidzhan. (I missed a half-hour television special on this "Jewish Autonomous Region" in eastern Siberia allocated under Stalin in 1928. "A couple of *goyim* speaking bad Yiddish" is how one of my students described it.) To

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counter the thirst of ordinary Jews for metaphysics, for God, the Communists gave them historical determinism. Instead of Moses they got Stalin.

Of course, other modern Jewish movements also renounced God and His Torah. Where else but on a kibbutz would Jews serve a visitor ham with so much visible pride? But even the old-time members of left-wing kibbutzim studied the Hebrew Bible, observed the "historical" and "agricultural" Jewish holidays, and settled a Jewish land. Moreover, the chief rabbi of pre-state Palestine sanctified their marriages *ex-post-facto* so that their children would not be certifiably illegitimate. Here in the Soviet Union, by contrast, one could neither live as a Jew nor die as one. My young male friends would not stand next to me in the urinal for fear I would see that they were not (yet) circumcised. In class, when we talked about the folk beliefs surrounding death, Elena the seventy-year-old atheist proclaimed that she would gladly forfeit resurrection in the Land of Israel in order to be cremated in Kiev instead. "I don't want to lie among *them*."

Robbed of their historical memory, their prayers silenced, and cut off for so long from other Jews, my students did not even know how to mourn. On Sunday, January 7, we organized an outing to the newly erected memorial at Babi Yar, where more than 30,000 Jews were machine-gunned by the Nazis on a single day in 1941, and where many thousands more were later dumped into a mass grave. For reasons I will never understand, our hosts brought along a professional tour guide as well. This man, a Jew, lectured us for twenty minutes in the freezing cold on the great achievements of the Red Army, and although his voice cracked when he came to the slaughter of the Jews, in his carefully rehearsed speech they were not permitted to be murdered alone. We had to be told about the Soviet sports team that was killed here, and about the sailors, lest chauvinism, God forbid, take root in our hearts. Finally, unable to take it anymore, we pushed our way to the memorial. One of the three plaques is in Yiddish, imperfectly executed, and is dedicated, like the other two, to the "over 100,000 citizens of Kiev" who were slaughtered here. For these "citizens"—the majority of whom were Jews—I chanted the memorial prayer *El Male Rachamim* and Peysakh Fiszman led us, phrase by phrase, through the mourners' Kaddish. Then we sang the Partisans' Hymn, learned in class only the day before.

That evening I attended the opening of the Israeli video library under the auspices of the Hebrew teachers' group, called Lavie. I was among the first to arrive at this hard-to-locate apartment in a bedroom suburb of Kiev. On the television screen the Israeli rock star Shlomo Artzi was performing in front of 1,500 screaming fans and, for the first time since my arrival, I burst out crying. The discrepancy between the morning, when we had been robbed even of our dead, and the evening, when the renewal of Jewish life was so palpably real, was more than I could bear.

The room was decorated with posters of Jerusalem and of the fruits of Israel, and texts of the various blessings to be made after eating. The fruits were especially appealing, given the chronic shortages in the Ukraine, still identified in my *Fodor's Guide* as the "breadbasket of the USSR." All in all, eighteen young people arrived for the opening, and while fourteen of them were busy watching a dramatization of the Entebbe raid, I sat with the remainder in the adjoining kitchen, giving a Hebrew dictation. For these were the newest crop of Hebrew teachers in Kiev and most of them had only begun studying the language a few months ago.

Sandwiched between the video screening and the spelling lesson was a meeting with Igor Kuperberg, representing the powers that be. Kuperberg brought news that the Ministry of Education was willing to take over the administration of the extension courses in Hebrew. Six hundred Kievites had already signed up for elementary Hebrew and many more were waiting on the sidelines. (Last year at this time it was impossible to get into an English class. Now these courses were being left high and dry.) The Ministry was offering a one-year contract, but Shaul Kotlarsky, the brilliant and charismatic leader of Lavie, cut short the discussion to ask: "Who in this room knows for certain that he will still be here a year from now?" Not a single person raised his hand.

So all this activity, it seemed, was but a temporary stopgap, a way of establishing a Jewish national presence before taking leave of Russia forever. And it made no difference whether one was studying Hebrew or Yiddish. At a Friday night gathering that Fiszman and I organized for our students, someone turned to me and said: "Do you see these people? Not one of them will still be here ten years from now." Indeed, the conundrum "To Go or Not to Go" had now been replaced by "Whether to Leave Sooner or Later" and "Whether to Pay Through the Nose Via Moscow or Take the Train to Budapest and Let the Jewish Agency Foot the Bill." The porters at Moscow International Airport had already gone on strike: they were sick of carrying baggage for the *Zhids*, though they would agree to do it for 100 rubles instead of the usual four. Even the Russian Karaites, for centuries set apart from the main body of the Jewish community by their rejection of the rabbinic Oral Law, were leaving en masse.

The knowledge of foresight added a dimension of unreality, if not of outright self-deception, to all our meetings with Ukrainians. As anxious as our hosts were to show us off to local officials, the latter were eager to make contact with us as Americans and as Jews.

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Our first meeting was with the director of Pedagogical Institute No. 1 on Borovskovo Street. On her table she had chocolates (a rare treat), and she was disappointed that we would not share a glass of champagne. To our suggestions for introducing a Yiddish- and Hebrew-language component into the school's curriculum she replied, "Today, everything is possible." After all, she told us, there were plans afoot to allow all the languages of the Ukraine's multiethnic population to be taught as well. Perhaps, she suggested half-earnestly, we could find an American sugar daddy willing to upgrade the school's pitiful computer room. Meanwhile, it was she who showered us with gifts—lavish art books from her private library for both Fiszman and myself.

The second meeting, with university English teachers, was more spontaneous. One of them nabbed me in the corridor of the Institute where our seminar met daily and asked whether I would address his colleagues on problems of higher education in the United States—for despite their subject, they had had little direct contact with Americans. So I threw together a one-hour talk on (1) the ills brought about by affirmative action; (2) the campaign for cultural literacy following the collapse of the core curriculum; and (3) the birth of Jewish Studies on campus (a bit of special pleading, I admit). Having themselves been raised on blatant discrimination for now-discredited ends, they readily agreed with me about affirmative action. But when I described the phenomenal rise of women's studies, following the earlier growth of Afro-American studies, they were incredulous. That conferences of the Modern Language Association could be staging grounds for militant interest groups was simply beyond their imagination. Finally, we got to the matter of the Jews. One teacher wanted to know if I ever had to hide my Jewish identity. Another asked about higher education in Israel (she turned out to be a Jew from Vilna, clearly contemplating *aliyah*). Later I learned that only recently had Jewish teachers come out of the closet; two of their number had already emigrated.

This candid and open-ended exchange left us all wishing for more, in contrast to my meeting the next day at the Ukrainian Writers Union. It is no small irony that the Union is housed in the former mansion of Lev Brodsky, the great Jewish sugar magnate of pre-revolutionary times, with its magnificent inlaid woods, huge ceramic stoves, and ceilings thirty feet high. In the room where his private synagogue was situated, the ceiling is removable, presumably to allow for a *sukkah*. All this our hosts—three Ukrainian writers and a professor from Kiev University—were eager to point out. Seated opposite us, they waxed eloquent over the past, and over the wonderful depictions of Jewish life in the works of famous Ukrainian authors. "If only there were young Yiddish writers here in the Ukraine," said Yuri Serdyuk, general secretary of the Union, wistfully. "We would gladly accept them into the Union and help them publish their work." Anti-Semitism in the Ukraine, he assured us, was dead; it survived only among the barbaric Russians to the north. On my side of the table sat Levitas and Kuperberg, each one there to foster the illusion of Jewish cultural achievements present and future.

After two weeks of endless talk, with one more day to my visit and nothing to lose, I interrupted the grandstanding. Jews and Ukrainians, I reminded our hosts, were not equal partners. Jewish culture, as I had come to see, was doubly crippled. Whatever had been achieved in the 20's and 30's was utterly destroyed by Stalin. But that culture too had been sick beyond recall. There simply was nothing left to resurrect. The greatest achievement of Ukrainian Jews—Hasidism—was no more than a *rebbe*'s tombstone visited by the faithful from abroad. It was bad enough that in the Ukrainian production I attended, Tevye blessed the Sabbath wine wearing a prayershawl. Worse was that not a single person in the predominantly Jewish audience could recognize the blatant error.

They did not hear me, these men of letters. They were too intent on planning the brave new world of a sovereign Ukraine in which the Jews would be the first among national minorities. They could not acknowledge that their putative Jewish allies feared that very independence and, because they feared it as much as they feared Gorbachev's demise, were leaving. I had come to Kiev with a letter of introduction to Volodymyr Yavorivsky, a deputy to the Supreme Soviet and a noted writer. "He's a friend of the Jews," I was told on arrival. "He'll tip us off two days before the pogrom."

Our actual leavetaking was fraught with emotion. Our students had written poems, presented us with certificates, and spent a lot of money on gifts and refreshments. They took down our addresses as if they were some magic charm. Meanwhile, Levitas announced a follow-up seminar from mid-June to mid-July and Kuperberg spoke about a Jewish elementary school opening up in Kiev in the fall of 1991. My friend Boruch Kimelfeld was drawing up plans for a new alphabet chart with all 22 letters of the alphabet and new graded readers with real Jewish content. Before leaving for Israel, where his goal was to teach Yiddish in a high school, he hoped to revive Jewish culture on Ukrainian soil.

As Kimelfeld and I left the Institute for the last time, the Ukrainian peasant woman who watched the door turned to her companion and said: "There go our little Jews." She said it with real affection and Boruch burst out laughing.

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Newspeak, Feminist-Style

Robert Lerner and Stanley Rothman

In the spring of 1974, the local Board of Education in Kanawha County, West Virginia, began the process of selecting new readers for the following school year, as required by state law. One member of the Board of Education, the wife of a fundamentalist minister, examined the new books under consideration and concluded that many were morally flawed and anti-Christian. After she showed them to others of similar persuasion and word got around, 1,000 people attended the board meeting at which the decision was to be made whether or not to adopt the books. Many of the citizens at the meeting wanted to reject the new books, and these protesters took the board's decision to adopt as a direct insult. In September a massive school boycott began. Events soon got out of hand, and protesters firebombed classrooms. Finally, the local Board of Education, while retaining the controversial books, agreed to allow parents to decide whether their children had to read them, and things quieted down.

This account of the Kanawha County dispute fits comfortably into a tradition of thinking about assaults on the curriculum. We can date this tradition from at least as early as H.L. Mencken's famous dispatches on the Scopes "monkey" trial in 1925. In this view, challenges to public education invariably originate with conservatives, who are motivated by Christian dogma or jingoism. Those who oppose them, like Scopes's lawyer Clarence Darrow, base their arguments on the liberal ideals of free speech and free inquiry.

Yet during the last thirty years, a different kind of effort has been mounted to censor and reshape elementary- and secondary-school textbooks. This effort, led by liberal feminists, has centered on the charge that most textbooks are "sexist," and so successful has it been that in a study of readers designed for elementary- and junior-high-school use, Paul Vitz could unearth no positive portrayals of motherhood or marriage for women. Moreover, in romantic fairy tales, women often save men, but not one man even attempts to save a woman, while stories about physical competition between girls and boys mostly show the girls winning. Vitz characterizes other competitive stories as variations on the theme, "Wonder Woman and the Wimp."

Such changes are not limited to early-grade readers alone. Although the results of our own study of forty years of high-school history textbooks are not all in, our findings are comparable to those of Vitz. For example, in the 1966 edition of a widely used textbook, *Rise of the American Nation*, there are 12 index entries under the heading "women" as compared with 38 in the 1982 revision of the same book. The latter include entries like "women at Jamestown," "Indian women," "women in colonial times," "women in the revolution," "problems of women workers," "expanding roles for women," etc., all of which are absent from the earlier volume, and some of which say little more than that women were present or could not vote.

The process by which feminists have achieved a success conservatives could only dream about in reshaping elementary- and secondary-school textbooks to conform to their political agenda can be separated into four different but interrelated parts. First came pressure from the women's movement. Second, the federal government responded to this by funding the development of an alternative feminist curriculum through a relatively obscure piece of legislation, the Women's Educational Equity Act of 1974 (WEEA), which remains law today. Third, members of the education professions, many of them women and many of them politically liberal, provided institutional support in transforming textbook material and teaching techniques. Finally, the publishing industry, which contained a substantial minority, or possibly even a majority, of persons who sympathized with the feminist movement, was only too willing to incorporate the desired changes into new editions of their books.

Educational reform has long been a prominent objective of feminists, and they have lobbied and organized to this end. Thus, the 1973 convention of the National Organization for Women (NOW) voted to take "dramatic action" against textbook publishers who perpetuated sex-role "stereotypes." In that same year, feminist groups also testified before Congress in support of the WEEA, and a year later, in 1974, the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education was formed to monitor the enforcement of Title IX, which bans "sexism" in federally funded education programs.

Also in the early 1970's, women's groups launched a number of specific task forces to combat what they regard as sexism in the curriculum. These included Women on Words and Images, a task force of NOW, which helped to persuade the publishing firm of Scott, Foresman to develop "anti-sexist"

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guidelines for textbooks, and Feminists on Children's Media, which agitated for, and circulated, lists of "non-sexist" children's books. The problem, as one publisher was quoted as saying, was not that there were no women in the textbooks, but that they were portrayed there as mothers and sisters rather than as "individuals."

If traditional curricular material was sexist because boys and men outnumbered girls and women, and, most importantly, because women appeared in nurturing roles while men appeared in achieving roles, then non-sexist books would have to show equal numbers of men and women in nurturing and achieving roles. In the new model, masculine and feminine traits would temper each other and combine (as one contributor to a U.S. government pamphlet put it) in "a balanced, more fully human, truly androgynous personality."

It is important to point out here that there were no federal guidelines in place to which these groups were objecting and which they wanted to revise. Rather, their objections were to generally accepted portrayals, which they wanted to make unacceptable and to replace through law or political pressure.

SINCE decisions about curricula usually occur at the local level, most textbook controversies are not federal issues. Nevertheless, it has often been federal funding that has assisted in the creation and dissemination of feminist curriculum materials, in the establishment of magazines and other media networks, and in the publication of alternatives to traditional curricula.

Under the WEEA, for example, the federal government in 1980 spent $10 million to fund the following projects (among others): the production of television programs "to explore educational inequities in women's sports in Southern California," with supplementary materials for classroom use; the writing of a manual for teachers and administrators on how to recognize and combat "sex-role stereotypes"; the development of materials to assist secondary-school teachers "to reduce sex-biased attitudes, change teacher behavior to reduce sex-role stereotyping, alter instructional strategies to promote sex-fair approaches"; the setting up of a program to involve teachers and parents in eight urban multicultural elementary schools in activities aimed at changing behaviors that reinforce the development of "sex-role stereotypes" in children.

Remarkably, the WEEA persisted even under the Reagan administration, surviving several attempts to kill it. To be sure, the office of Women's Educational Equity was downgraded under Reagan to the lowest bureaucratic level, the staff was reduced from eight to five, the nationally recognized program director was fired, and funding was reduced from $10 to about $6 million per year. Yet the program enjoyed such powerful political support that it was retained.

As far as feminist groups were concerned, the survival of the program, despite low-level funding, ensured a continued impact on curriculum. Testimony for the 1984 reauthorization included support for disseminating "non-sexist" curricula by sponsoring a quarterly magazine for that purpose and a teacher handbook on "sex equity." The materials were then to be published and distributed with the help of the WEEA staff, again with funding provided by the federal government. Reagan signed the reauthorization of the act without comment.

THE role of states and localities in condoning or condemning textbooks according to their adherence to ideological guidelines has also changed at least as much as the role of the federal government. In fact, in recent years the 22 states that have statewide textbook-adoption policies have played a major part in restructuring the entire textbook market, because of the volume of sales they control.

In one of those states, California, the law, in addition to the well-known sexually-neutral language requirements, establishes the following guidelines: (1) illustrations must contain approximately equal proportions of men and women; (2) in the representation of each profession, including parent, men and women must be shown in equal numbers; (3) the contributions of men and women to developments in history or achievements in art or science must appear in equal numbers; (4) mentally and physically active, creative, problem-solving roles, and success or failure in these roles, must be divided evenly between males and females; (5) the number of traditional and non-traditional activities engaged in by characters of both sexes must be approximately even; (6) the gamut of emotions must occur randomly among characters, regardless of gender; and (7) both sexes must be portrayed in nurturing roles with their families.

The process of screening that accompanies these rules specifies that a textbook must pass muster at open hearings around the state. NOW has participated extensively in such hearings and helped to influence the choice of textbooks. Publishers are held to very stringent standards of "sexism" and must respond to *any* criticism in order for a text to be accepted. The result, of course, is that only texts which satisfy these criteria for historical and thematic representation become part of the official curriculum.

ALTHOUGH professionals in the field of education have fought ferociously against efforts by conservatives or traditionalists to censor textbooks and other curricular materials, their response to similar campaigns by feminists has generally been one of eager acquiescence. To cite only two representative instances. In 1972, no sooner did feminist groups demand the elimination of "sex-role stereotypes" from the curriculum and the textbooks than the New York State Teachers Association endorsed their demand. Similarly, in 1973, a feminist group in Kalamazoo, Michigan, complained that the Houghton Mifflin readers then being used in the local schools presented an "unbalanced" picture of women. The director of elementary education remarked that "while we could have resisted the demands of the

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committee, we didn't." With the support of school officials, the protesters spent the summer devising supplementary materials which were used to "correct" the original readers.

The same trend is also quite clear among teacher organizations at the national level. Thus, the National Council for Social Studies, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the American Personnel and Guidance Association, and the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education have all been very sympathetic to the feminist censors and, at least by implication, have supported the changes they have been imposing upon the textbooks.

So too with the publishers. One survey of editors found that only 20 percent characterized themselves as conservatives, while 47 percent characterized themselves as liberals, and 33 percent as strong liberals or radicals. Moreover, 70 percent of the men and 90 percent of the women identified themselves as Democrats. No wonder, then, that Scott, Foresman, working with the feminist group Women on Words and Images, developed the first guidelines on sexual content for textbooks in 1972, and that representatives of the same firm testified in favor of the WEEA at a hearing held in the House. There, it was made clear that a group of women had formed within the company, specifically for the purpose of rewriting textbooks. The person testifying also noted that 80 percent of the editors at the firm were women.

At the same time as these changes from above were taking place, pressure from the state of California, which instituted stringent requirements concerning the proper representation of women in textbooks adopted for the entire state, prompted such other publishers as Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Houghton Mifflin, and Macmillan to follow suit. (Not that they necessarily needed to be pressured, given the fact that they, like Scott, Foresman, were only too ready to go along with the feminist agenda.)

ARE the changes feminists have made in the textbooks overdue reforms of a system that denied a significant segment of the population fair representation, or are they a nonfictional example of what George Orwell in *1984* referred to as Newspeak? Surely the latter. Equal numbers of men and women performing the same roles in equal proportion may represent an ideal for the future—though that is itself, to put it mildly, debatable. What is not debatable, however, is that such a picture distorts the simple truth both about the present and the past. To bolster it with law and public funds is to use the power of government to spread a blatant lie. As such, it is indeed a form of Newspeak—and so is the fact that it justifies itself in the name of liberal values.

Why Whittaker Chambers Was Wrong

Charles Horner

WHITTAKER CHAMBERS (1901-61) was a Communist who left the party in 1938 to become one of its most determined enemies. He also became famous for his testimony against Alger Hiss, and was admired by many for *Witness* (1952), a compelling autobiographical account of his conversion/deconversion experience. In and of itself, a journey to and from Communism was not uncommon among American intellectuals; many toyed with it, fewer ended up as hard-core disciples, fewer still as operational agents under Soviet direction. In addition to having been a real spy, what made Chambers distinctive in this group, and what really fueled the controversy which dogged him, were the direction and distance of his migration.

His deconversion was one not of degree but of kind. He did not remain on the Left and replace his prior Stalinist allegiance with some softer substitute—Democratic socialism, Democratic liberalism, moderate Republicanism, or any such. Instead he embraced a religious faith which, in shorthand, was a de-facto Catholicism, theologically rigorous, personally demanding, politically tough—a fighting religion, seemingly at odds with the Quakerism he actually professed.

Chambers was a great admirer of St. Benedict (c.480-c.547) and, as such, he probably read Pope Gregory I's (590-604) account of Benedict's life. If he did, he probably also took to heart Gregory's main point: "Benedict had a greater desire to endure the evils of this world than to receive its praises. He pre-

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ferred to be worn out in toiling for God rather than lifted up by acclaim granted in this life." For Chambers himself became one of the least acclaimed, most thoroughly reviled, figures in postwar American life. Nor has he been rehabilitated; despite the Medal of Freedom he was given posthumously by Ronald Reagan, there is still no sign of forgiving revisionism among the historians.

Now Terry Teachout, a member of the editorial board of the New York *Daily News,* has assembled 52 examples of what he calls Chambers's forgotten career as a journalist.* The anthology begins with four pieces published in 1931 in the Communist-party magazine *New Masses,* and ends with a dozen items that appeared in William F. Buckley, Jr.'s *National Review* from 1957 through 1959. There are pieces from *Commonweal* and *American Mercury* in between.

But it is in a nine-year period in the middle, 1939-48, when Chambers wrote for *Time* and *Life,* that one can best read him as a professional journalist. During his career at *Time,* as the many examples of his articles show and as he recounts in *Witness,* he wrote and edited in every department except business, edited foreign news, and worked on special projects, the magazine's section on religion, literature, and philosophy. He wrote the basic text for *Life*'s "History of Western Culture" (1947-48), a characteristically exuberant Time, Inc. project of the Henry Luce era. "At a critical moment, *Time* gave me back my life . . . my voice . . . sanctuary, professional respect, peace, and time to mature my changed view of the world," Chambers later wrote. "I went to *Time* as a fugitive; I left it a citizen."

To become a citizen under the aegis of *Time*—what should we take that to mean? Henry Luce had a vision for *Time,* not only as a publishing venture but as a civic undertaking. Though a mass-circulation magazine, *Time* was interested in raising the general level of the country's understanding of philosophy, history, and culture, to give rounding to the society. Luce was not alone in this. It was a popular concept of the day and it led in time to publishing projects to bring the "best" to everybody—classics of literature and philosophy, the *Great Books of the Western World,* or *Aristotle for Everyone,* as one popular title had it. This was, in part, old-fashioned American boosterism of the sort that would motivate the city fathers of Omaha to seek a place on the Metropolitan Opera's national tour. It was, in another part, a defensive response to the criticism of intellectuals at home and abroad that the country was uncouth. And, of course, it was part of *Time*'s weekly business simply to report on what was going on.

If Teachout's selections are adequately representative of Chambers's work for the magazine, his role in this undertaking was striking. He wrote about Joyce, Kafka, Toynbee, Barth, Niebuhr, Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Einstein, and Santayana. Interestingly, only one of them (Niebuhr, whose father emigrated from Germany) was an American, and not a one of them could be reckoned a man of sunny disposition. It is hard to imagine that Luce, in paying Chambers to make these thinkers more familiar to Americans, wanted Americans actually to think like them or to live and work like them. Yet it was clearly men like these, far more than Luce, who informed, shaped, and directed Chambers's general sense of how one ought to go about the general tasks of thinking and living.

Indeed, Chambers was cerebral to the core. In one of many striking passages in *Witness,* he describes how reading *Les Misérables* helped make him into a Communist and how, in 1937, he read three other books which helped ease him out of the party. And the *Time* pieces, taken together with other contemporaneous writings, underscore that he was cerebral in a 20th-century way. He is gloomy. He is increasingly distressed by modern life; ". . . the more civilization calls itself civilized, the more imperturbably it shrugs at the death of millions." He is interested in the medieval, the religious, the papal. His view of the West's predicament becomes ever more grim. He writes in *Commonweal* of the West's "spiritual despondency . . . intellectual confusion . . . moral chaos."

And of course there is that memorable passage in *Witness* where Chambers recounts his conversation with his wife after he decided to break with the Communists: "I said, 'We are leaving the winning world for the losing world.' I meant that, in the revolutionary conflict of the 20th century, I knowingly chose the side of probable defeat." In this, he was spectacularly at odds with his boss. Henry Luce proclaimed this the American Century; he said we were going to win—and he was right. Chambers said the Communists would win, but he was wrong. Why?

In the first place, Chambers was not alone in underestimating the stamina of the United States. The Nazis and the Japanese warlords thought the country fatally weak of will. The Communists thought the same. And while disdain for the United States is an established Old World tradition, many Americans have also aped it. There is a kind of stay-at-home expatriation in American thought and letters and Chambers shared in it. For despite the obvious power and conviction of his thought, there was little in it that we think of as familiarly "Amurrican." He may well have understood the clash of cultures at its most sublime yet missed the essence of the United States at its most pedestrian.

For the men who organized and maintained our resistance to the Communists—Acheson, Eisenhower, Jackson, Marshall, Nitze, Truman—were neither monks nor knights of the sort Chambers imagined were needed to win the struggle. They were, if not "ordinary citizens," then ordinary products of our society. In the end, their successes resulted from the stubborn application of America's pedestrian civic virtues, not Europe's capacity for compulsiveness.

Just as Chambers was not alone in failing to anticipate the resiliency of the American citizenry and its leadership, he overestimated the durability of Communism as an

* *Ghosts on the Roof: Selected Journalism of Whittaker Chambers, 1931-1959.* Regnery, 361 pp., $24.95.

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object of faith. Observing the universal, transnational appeal of Communism in his day, he quite naturally concluded that only a creed of comparable ecumenical potential could stand up against it. In his mind, this creed had to be a "pre-modern" one.

In retrospect, we now know that the American civic creed—buttressed, to be sure, by the capacity of the American economic system to deliver the goods—has had enormous transnational appeal. True, it is not a wholly secular creed; true, too, it became a more militant faith during the presidency of Ronald Reagan, who, in George Will's word, "remoralized" the cold war. But Reagan was hardly a religious militant, nor even very much of an ideologue. He was, plain and simple, the representative American citizen who, in due course, was adopted by the world as its representative citizen.

Although for some, Chambers's way of looking at things will retain its powerful emotional, intellectual, and aesthetic appeal, his sensibility never did have a wide following in the country. Mega-concepts, whether home-grown or foreign-made, do not stand up very well to the relentless reality of America which somehow always manages to whittle them down. It turns out that Communism was no match for it, either.

Fiction

Pynchon's Progress

Carol Iannone

For anyone who has suspected that in literature the postmodern really amounts to the posthuman, the work of Thomas Pynchon will supply abundant proof. Pynchon's early novels, *V* (1963), *The Crying of Lot 49* (1965), and *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973), are usually categorized, along with the work of such writers as William Gaddis and John Barth, as metafiction, a genre that in hindsight can be seen to have gone beyond modernism and to have anticipated deconstructionism in its abrogation of meaning in fiction. But actually Pynchon has raised this genre to a higher exponent, to a sort of meta-metafiction. In William Gaddis's *Recognitions*, for example, one can actually tease out some sense that there are things somewhere to be recognized, however ephemeral, and some conviction on the author's part that the novel itself has caught some experience of reality, however fragmentary. Not so with Pynchon, whose 760-page *Gravity's Rainbow*, in the words of one critic, "turning ever inward on itself . . . must inevitably self-destruct in our hands."

Pynchon's repudiation of all constructs of meaning, including any implied by his own work, has of course not stopped critics from trying to extract meaning from his books, and he has generated an enormous amount of commentary, a lot of it as aimless and incoherent as his novels. "The central metaphor of his novel *V* has remained stubbornly resistant to exegesis," one helpful overview informs us, "although some critics have called *V* no less than a metaphor for the 20th century"—a rather ominous assertion in the light of another critic's judgment that the "matrix of the novel is a perception of death and nothingness."

Nor, we are told, can we look to "the mere *content*" of Pynchon's novels themselves "for confirmation of the old humanistic concept of the self, or for evidence of the resistance of human goodness against the inroads of greed and power, or for some overt moral." The only "hope" Pynchon offers lies in his own act of composing anything at all in the face of the nothingness that is at the core of his vision. "The bounteous creation of the book," insists one enthusiast of *Gravity's Rainbow*, "is the book's affirmation against the exhaustion, the surrender to the inanimate, which always threatens man in our century"—although why we should or should not resist surrender to the inanimate in the first place is never examined.

The ostensible reason Pynchon is so fearful of traditional fictive structures is that he sees any "plot," including the "plot" of history itself, as a potential danger to individual freedom. Out of this determination to avoid any kind of coercive fiction, Pynchon creates his characteristically formless form and all but unreadable style—a

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style, however, that ironically ends up by compromising the very autonomy of his characters, who are virtual puppets in the hands of large impersonal forces and institutions, not to mention of the author himself. Pynchon's insistence in *Gravity's Rainbow* on "the end of history," together with the lapse in his work of any discerning ego or subject, leads not to greater freedom but to less, as a coherent and universally recognizable reality yields (as Robert Alter has suggested) to authorial self-indulgence and to the idiosyncratic vagaries and calculated formal designs of certain individuals who happen at any moment to occupy the fore.

PYNCHON'S new novel, *Vineland*,* can be seen as another illustration of this regressive perversion of the idea of freedom, although perhaps not in the way he intends. The Northern California community of Vineland is a core of burnt-out but persistent counterculturalism in a country overrun by Reaganism. Aging hippie Zoyd Wheeler (as in all Pynchon novels, *Vineland*'s characters have stupid cartoon names) is presented as a fairly ridiculous if still lovable anachronism. But Zoyd's pointlessly unconventional existence only makes him a greater foil of the system: for example, he sometimes earns money by catching lobsters which are then served in high-powered yuppie restaurants along the coast.

Sensing the lack in her life, Zoyd's teenage daughter Prairie sets out on a fabulous, arduous journey to find her long-lost maternal parent, Frenesi Gates, who abandoned her in infancy. We discover in the course of the novel that years before Frenesi had turned informer on her radical friends because of an irresistible attraction to federal prosecutor Brock Vond, who, as a representative of government control, is the locus of evil in Pynchon's universe, although he can be as charming as he is brutal. Like such fictive predecessors as the police inspector in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Vond knows more about his prey than they know about themselves. His

> genius was to have seen in the activities of the 60's Left not threats to order but unacknowleged desires for it. While the Tube was proclaiming youth revolution against parents of all kinds and most viewers were accepting this story, Brock saw the deep—if he'd allowed himself to feel it, the sometimes touching—need only to stay children forever, safe inside some extended national Family.

Pynchon seems to be suggesting that a covert need for order and structure rendered 60's radicals like Frenesi vulnerable to people like Vond, and led to their being compromised by the system. (There is also a suggestion that women find a fascist like Vond more appealing than the soft-headed, long-haired model of masculinity represented by the hippie type.) Pynchon also sees in radicalism a flight from mortality, a desire to escape from the burden of self, a need for transcendence—but none of his insights really matters. They are more like the disembodied flashes of a drug trip or a psychiatric case history than the insights that arise out of a coherent development of character. But then, such a development would require precisely the type of "coercive" fiction the postmodern Pynchon is always fleeing.

At the same time, however, with all Pynchon's usual repudiation of any fixed meaning, like the dancing multilimbed Hindu gods who never settle in one spot, *Vineland* itself amounts to a coercive fiction—a fairly straightforward attempt to manipulate the history of the 60's in the manner of many a recent Hollywood film. Like the Dennis Hopper movie *Flashback*, for example, Pynchon seems to want to present the 60's as a period of youthful idealism, of profound longings, pure intentions, high spirits, and fresh-faced enthusiasm gone slightly sour. Perhaps the worst quality that can be perceived in his one-time radicals is a trace of self-indulgence, of which Zoyd is given an opportunity to repent in the course of the novel. As for Prairie, despite having been abandoned in infancy by her mother and raised by a whacked-out Zoyd, she is a model of level-headedness and resourcefulness. The end of the novel has her reunited with her mother and even her grandmother, an old-time Hollywood radical, poised on the edge of the future; this again reminds one of the Dennis Hopper character in *Flashback* who prophesies, "Once we're out of the 80's, the 90's are gonna make the 60's look like the 50's."

Perhaps Pynchon thinks that in resisting structure he is helping to make people resistant to the Brock Vonds of this world. But as his own radicals attest, those who think they can escape all system and order eventually wind up as the victims of those who know better. As for those who believe that history, in the form of coherent narrative, has ended, they, it seems, are merely condemned to unreadability—and best-sellerdom.

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* Little, Brown, 385 pp., $19.95.

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The Second "Thawra"

INTIFADA. THE PALESTINIAN UPRISING: ISRAEL'S THIRD FRONT. By ZE'EV SCHIFF and EHUD YA'ARI. Edited and translated by INA FRIEDMAN. *Simon & Schuster. 325 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by EDWARD NORDEN

A WORD to start with concerning the credentials, resources, and politics of the authors of this book.

Ze'ev Schiff for decades has been the military correspondent at *Ha'aretz*, the Israeli equivalent of the New York *Times*. He is the paper's Drew Middleton, who knows everything there is to know about the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), including the thinking and complaints of its general staff, serving and retired. As well as being his own man, Schiff is a creature of his place of employment. The owners and editors set a Left-liberal tone at *Ha'aretz*. They can often be found, in and out of the pages of the paper, pleading with Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres to be a man, censuring Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin for his callousness, and simply throwing their hands up over Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir. On occasion Schiff does it too.

The junior author, Ehud Ya'ari, has for the last fifteen years been the chief Arabist at Israel TV's news department. This is an organization the members of which, to hear an Israeli cabbie tell it, always put their dovish, not to say unpatriotic, sentiments above their public and national duties—Israel TV, unlike *Ha'aretz*, is paid for out of taxes. Let it be noted that the cabbie is wrong. The TV reporters, most of whom indeed are Left-liberal in their hearts, are sufficiently professional and solicitous of their jobs not to let their feelings glare in their work. And this includes Ya'ari, who has contacts in the Shin Bet (Internal Security) and among Palestinians second to none.

That is the general direction the team of Schiff and Ya'ari is coming from. "Our sole purpose," they say in the preface to this account of the Palestinian uprising, ". . . is to contribute to a better understanding of the tempest that has been raging in our country . . . so that the necessary conclusions can be drawn." Those "conclusions" are not left to the reader. They are sometimes implicit, more often commendably explicit, from the book's beginning to its end, and are such as will look necessary to many of the authors' colleagues, though not to most Israelis.

The main, and predictable, conclusion is that most of the occupied West Bank and Gaza should be turned over to the Palestinians without much ado. It hangs on the worried perception that the *intifada* has rattled the Israeli psyche, together with the hopeful view that the uprising is aimed at getting rid, not of Zionism, not of the Jewish state, but only of the occupation—and that even if this proves untrue, Israel will not have placed itself in a more dangerous spot by withdrawing.

Schiff and Ya'ari, in other words, are not political scientists or historians. They are high-class journalists who are, as used to be said, "engaged." This will come through unmistakably even to an American reader in many places; for example, where the authors equate "the forces of reason" in Israel with the "liberal, leftist camp."

At worst, then, this book would only have provided a reflection of how a segment of Israelis, the doves, see the *intifada*. Happily, it does more. The best parts are those where the authors' unrivaled sources are brought into play, i.e., where the reader is given an inside picture of how the IDF tried, and failed, to get a grip on the uprising in its first months, and how a new generation of Palestinians sought, successfully, to keep the flames which had broken out in the refugee camps of Gaza burning. The latter material is especially good, based as it probably is on Shin Bet interrogations.

It was in the refugee camps, according to Schiff and Ya'ari, that the *intifada* combusted spontaneously in December 1987, taking both Israel and the PLO in Tunis by surprise. Neither had the right to be surprised. The Israelis, and especially their government, had been "ignoring" the people under occupation, offering them, at best, only the prospect of more occupation, while the PLO for all its terror and public relations had won them nothing substantial. The "humiliated" Palestinian "proletariat" in the camps was the most "enraged" by the "disgraceful conditions" of life which the Israelis did little, and the PLO nothing, to alleviate.

Therefore, as Schiff and Ya'ari explain, "frustration" exploded in Gaza, then in the towns and villages of the West Bank, where too the better-off living in proper houses felt at a "dead end," their college graduates obliged to wash dishes and their land encroached on by Jewish settlements. Generalizing, the authors write, "Chained to their poverty and gradually despoiled of their land, the Palestinians . . . felt trapped in a system that seemed designed to grind them down to the dust of humanity so that at an opportune moment Israel could blow them over the border."

The consequent and inevitable reaction against Israeli soldiers and civilians, dubbed the *intifada* or "shaking-off" in Arabic, constituted a "wholly new kind" of war, waged "by masses of civilians." It opened a "third front" against Israel, the traditional two being those on which conventional armies and secret terrorist cells were fought.

EDWARD NORDEN, *an ex-American Israeli, contributed "Behind 'Who Is a Jew' " to our April 1989 issue.*

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Now it is true that the *intifada* started in the refugee camps and surprised the rather complacent, somewhat demoralized IDF and Shin Bet. It would have been even more truthful of Schiff and Ya'ari to have added that the doves' pet hate, Ariel Sharon, had been warning for months before then that the *shabiba* ("boys") clubs in the camps were forming a self-governing authority in defiance of the military government, and handsomer still to have given more credit to Israel for fitfully trying, over the years, to improve conditions in the camps by coaxing residents to build their own homes and move out.

This scheme was too costly for Israel to carry through on its own, but every time the U.S. was approached for help, the answer came that the refugee problem should only be tackled when peace was made. So the UN-administered camps festered and swelled. The situation suited the UN bureaucracy, and of course the PLO, although the PLO was also surprisingly astonished by the timing, extent, and persistence of the *intifada.*

That said, it is obvious that as time passed and a new generation of Palestinians, in and out of the camps, grew up and saw no chance of becoming free men and women in what they believed was their own country, the fuse had to spin down on a great charge of resentment. The paradox here is one known to historians and psychologists of revolution. The odds on revolts breaking out increase when things become materially better. As crowded as the refugee camps were on the eve of the uprising, they were heavenly compared with what they were before the Six-Day War. And outside the camps—most of the occupied Palestinians live outside—life as registered by employment, health, and education statistics was also better than before the IDF arrived.

The Israelis for two decades liberally fostered the ideal conditions for an eventual rebellion. The recipe for the Palestinians included a higher standard of living, minus economic independence, plus exposure to Israeli democracy, plus a growing and contemptuous familiarity with the slapdash quality of Israeli life and law enforcement, minus any prospect of self-determination, plus the fear that some day the Jewish state would annex everything. Thus, on a very small and special scale, the occupation exhibited some of the features of a benign colonialism, in this case operating not overseas but up the hill from Tel Aviv, in territory taken in a war of self-defense and thick with the biblical place names on which Zionism was nursed. It was unreasonable to expect the Palestinians most affected to acquiesce.

So THE *intifada* broke out. But, contrary to Schiff and Ya'ari, history in these parts has a precedent for it.

Though a reader of this book would not know it, the *intifada* is not the Palestinians' first uprising. That was in 1936-39, and it was waged using many of the same methods as the current one, minus television. The motives, too, were not completely dissimilar. If the *intifada* was born of resentment and foreboding, and fed by Islamic passions, so was the *thawra* ("revolution") of the 1930's, a time when German Jews were fleeing into the country by boatloads and a few Palestinian landlords were making fortunes selling their patrimony to the Zionists. The *thawra* was the natural reaction of natives who did not want to be displaced by foreigners. It was led by a religious-political figure, Haj Amin al-Husseini.

Led bloodily astray; for, after gaining concessions from the British Mandatory regime, Haj Amin concentrated on terrorizing his own people. The result of this, and of British repression on the eve of World War II, was that the *thawra* was sustained for only three years, and left the Palestinians enervated for at least two generations. It also had a steeling effect on the Zionists, convincing such doves as Arthur Ruppin that if the Jewish national project could only be realized against Arab resistance, so be it.

In several ways of which Schiff and Ya'ari were either unaware or did not care to examine, the *intifada* is a continuation, perhaps a replay, of the *thawra.* Both uprisings were natural reactions, and as such inevitable. But if the *intifada,* short of an Israeli withdrawal, could not have been avoided, could it at least have been nipped in the bud?

Schiff and Ya'ari say yes. The *intifada* evolved from amorphous riots to an organized rebellion due to the IDF's "failure to pour reinforcements into the West Bank and Gaza immediately." A swift, terrible response would, the authors declare, concurring with Sharon, have stopped the *intifada* in its tracks, though it would not have "changed the circumstances that brought [it] about." In the event, they should have added, the hesitant response furnished more evidence of the not-so-oppressive nature of the occupation until that point.

However, by the time, six months ago, that Schiff and Ya'ari finished their book, the *intifada* had gone through several phases, and so had the Israeli response. As the authors relate, the IDF at first was at a loss. The PLO took advantage of this to adopt the uprising and institutionalize it. The "crux of the dispute" between the IDF general staff and the politicians of the Likud, a dispute which complicated the army's response for a while, was that the generals thought they could stifle only some of the symptoms of the uprising, not the causes, while the Likudniks believed the army should and could crush it completely. This dispute was never formally settled, but as things turned out it made little difference. The army, challenged by the Palestinian kids and the Israeli politicians, brought in better officers and troops. It improvised new, much harsher tactics of suppression and applied them, not to the politicians, but to the kids and their families.

As a result, if by last fall "the [normal] instruments of occupation had been damaged beyond repair," the Palestinians, despite their early euphoria and persistent courage, had not gotten the occupation off their backs. It was a kind of standoff in which the Islamic fundamentalists prospered at the expense of the PLO, and terrorism

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among Palestinians threatened to eclipse the struggle against the foreigner, as it had utterly in the *thawra*.

HALF A CENTURY in the Middle East can sometimes mean nothing. Half a year can sometimes mean a great deal. In the six months since Schiff and Ya'ari delivered their manuscript, the IDF has continued grimly reestablishing its writ in the occupied territories, while the Palestinians, who may never again be as docile before Jewish power as previously, have continued to turn more and more on themselves. This is rarely reported in the New York *Times*. But it is there in *Ha'aretz* and on Israel TV, and testifies to what must be chalked up so far as the uprising's political defeat.

It was obviously never the expectation of the smarter kids or of the PLO that they would end the occupation by force of Molotov cocktails and stones. Nor did Israeli doves expect it. They simply hoped that the shock of the uprising would be translated into political changes which would make Israeli withdrawal and Palestinian self-determination, if not certain, much more likely.

There are two principal reasons why this has not happened. First, most Israelis do not respond favorably to force of any kind. Second, the PLO, which in the rosiest of scenarios would contain the Islamic Front and rule the territories if Israel withdrew, has yet to persuade enough Israelis that it is bent on anything except the erasure of their country—this, despite Yasir Arafat's speeches in Stockholm and Geneva. As the late Anwar Sadat understood, psychology is politics. So although the percentage of Israelis who would have their government parley with Arafat has doubled under the impact of the *intifada* to two out of ten, almost all IDF reservists, including doves, still show up to suppress it when called, and no fewer than 70 out of 100 Jewish citizens, in a poll published in the country's biggest paper, including Labor-party voters, say they think Prime Minister Shamir is doing a good job.

He is trying to ride out the *intifada*, to prevent the PLO from reaping the political fruits. So far, though besieged by *Ha'aretz* and from inside his own party, he has largely succeeded, so the fate of the three-year-long *thawra* continues to loom over the *intifada*—next December, when three years have passed since it exploded, will the *intifada* have accomplished more for the Palestinians? Had Schiff and Ya'ari waited at least until then to write their account, and asked this question in a historical context, their work might have been more valuable.

For the abiding weakness of their effort is the result not only of politics but of their ahistoricity. They have started and ended, as journalists are wont to do, *in medias res*. Besides ignoring Palestinian history, they have not tried to locate current events in the context of Jewish, and specifically Zionist, history, either. It has become clear why that has to be done. The brave, bloody, not-so-surprising uprising of the Palestinians, whatever its outcome, is sure to be tied in the minds of future generations, both Arab and Israeli, with the arrival of many hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews in Zion, an exodus with an epic quality attending the collapse of an empire and superannuating much of the conventional wisdom and futurology of the Arab-Israeli fight. The authors seem never to have imagined such a wrinkle.

A Writer's Tale

GOODNIGHT! By ABRAM TERTZ (ANDREI SINYAVSKY). Translated by RICHARD LOURIE. *Viking. 364 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by FERNANDA EBERSTADT

"I WAS born under the 'Stalin-Kirov-Zhdanov-Hitler-Stalin' constellation," says Andrei Sinyavsky, one of Russia's greatest liv-

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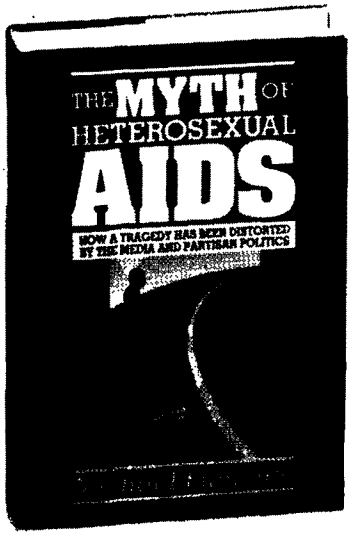

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ing writers, in his new autobiographical novel. Sinyavsky was born in 1925, the son of a Russian nobleman who turned Social Revolutionary and was later arrested as an enemy of the people; the young man's own patriotic Communism was shattered in 1948 when the KGB ordered him to seduce and entrap a fellow graduate student, the daughter of a French naval attaché. This experience constituted "the most serious crisis of my life, after which it was emotionally impossible for me to return to the ranks of moral and political unity with the Soviet people and the Soviet society. . . ."

Thus, paradoxically, it was the KGB that turned a rather innocent, dreamy scholar of Pushkin and Pasternak into a "hardened criminal"—which means, for Sinyavsky, a writer. For almost ten years, he lived a double life, lecturing at a prestigious institute while publishing abroad works of nervy, impassioned satire under the pseudonym Abram Tertz (after the Jewish gangster hero of an Odessa ballad). In 1965, a childhood friend unmasked him: Sinyavsky and his friend the late Yuli Daniel were arrested and charged with anti-Soviet propaganda and crimes against the state. It was the first time writers had been put on trial for opinions expressed by fictional characters, and the proceedings, which signaled the end of Khrushchev's Thaw, caused an international furor. Sinyavsky served six years in a Mordovian labor camp. Since 1973, he has been living near Paris.

Goodnight! is a memoir unlike any other. Bawdy, mystical, satiric, philosophical by turns, composed in a kind of broken, ecstatic stream of consciousness, interspersed with fragments of surrealist fiction, drama, medieval history, art criticism, and verse, the book follows the scent of memory and association, indifferent to formal chronology, stubbornly original. Sinyavsky seems to believe that everything still exists that has ever been—or, in his image, that we are like passengers on a long-distance train, dragging both our own memories and world history behind us like rolling stock—and the happily discursive curlicues of his narrative, dreamy as smoke rings, cunning as a nautilus shell, mirror this belief.

Goodnight! unfolds in concentric movements. "They grabbed me near Nikitsky Gate," the book begins in a sad, mocking line. The first two chapters recount arrest, trial, transport, gulag—the same terrain described exhaustively by dozens of Soviet writers and poets over the last fifty years. Sinyavsky deploys the familiar formulas with the genius of a Sidney or Donne playing against the constraints of the sonnet, using them as a springboard for his own quirky disquisitions on Boris Godunov, aspens and larches, memory, sex, writing, or for flights of Gogolian fantasy which succeed in conveying more precisely than cold fact the flavor of Soviet reality.

Perhaps the strangest discovery is how very happy the narrator is to find himself in the clink, how fond he is of his interrogator, his guards, even the informer who put him there. "They punished this pig by putting him in a clover-patch!" he gloats. And in a later flashback we learn that for years "prison fascinated me like a whirlpool." Prison is the place to observe human nature at its barest extremes, to "grasp the mystery of power and the enigma . . . of a society whose life work is the destruction of life, personality, art in general, and me in particular," to mingle with murderers, idiots, and bandits, to feel truly free. Nothing will ever equal it: "Later, many years later, when entering Parisian basement dives, mingling with the crowds at Italian carnivals, attending corridas in Madrid, or contemplating the arrogant erections of office towers and skyscrapers in America, I never again encountered the style, rhythm, and vital stimulus that make prison so terrifying, magnetic, consoling."

But against a passage like this, which might mislead one into thinking of Sinyavsky as a martyrdom-hungry Pollyana, there is, by contrast, the aching savageness of his chapter on the "public house," that heartbreak hotel described so plangently by Gustav Herling in *A World Apart,* in which prisoners once a year are allowed a night's reunion with their families. This bitter tale of spasmodic couplings spied on by guards, of tears, stench, alienation, culminates with Sinyavsky trying in a kind of broken, epiphanal language to describe what language cannot describe. Dawn brings to a close his lone night with his wife in a "shame-stained, panic-stricken room":

> Then you begin to realize that the flesh, or, how to put it, the animal principle that, under normal conditions, instills shame in you, or, if you're lucky, pride and good cheer, is not the plaything of the idle rich and sensualists, but while you're alive is a way of finishing what words could not fully say to your sole confederate and deputy on this earth in the time God has allotted her. . . . Like blind kittens, like earthworms, we squirm and grope at each other, seeking the clearest way to send coded signals about ourselves and the sufferings we endure. . . . "Know who I am and forgive me. There's no one else in the world. Nowhere, never. You are the only one who understands. Think of me before the end. Until the end. . . ."

The third and most majestic section of the book (there are five in all) is a history of his father, a proud stubborn revolutionary of encyclopedic learning and an austere sense of justice. This chapter, set during a walk in the forest after the old man's release from prison, unfolds by way of childhood anecdotes, family history, paeans to white birches and locomotives. The father's sometimes difficult dignity is borne in upon us by funny little stories from his childhood, adolescence, and maturity. Then, in the middle of the walk, the old man breaks the news that since his release from prison his brain has been wiretapped by the KGB. It is an eerie tribute both to the father's incorruptible rationality and to the son's own habit of sympathetic reverence that Sinyavsky chooses to believe him. By the end of the chapter he tells us that "I both understood and took upon myself his rumbling remoteness from the entire world and his rigorous concentration on thoughts and images to

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which he alone had access." More: this very combination of remoteness and concentration, symbolized by the father-son retreat to the forest and its revelations, has become for Sinyavsky a metaphor of the writer's withdrawal to the primeval realm where stories begin. "'Time to put me on paper,' says the forest, becoming a text."

FROM his first appearance as the unknown Abram Tertz, Sinyavsky has been blessed in his English translators. Richard Lourie, who last year brilliantly edited and translated Aleksander Wat's monumental *My Century*, here offers an inspired rendering of Sinyavsky's style which in its jagged metaphors and stream of consciousness is very much a poet's prose. *Goodnight!* is altogether Sinyavsky's most fertile work to date, an exhilarating, hard-driven book whose romanticism and nervous impatience are everywhere tempered by a transparently modest religiosity. "Life," Sinyavsky somewhat jestingly remarks here, is "what you do while waiting to write." It is one of the many spiritual triumphs of this fictional memoir by a sprung son of a senile Stalinism that its true subject remains not Communism, prison, Russia, or exile, but the act of writing itself.

Prisoners of Gender

JUSTICE, GENDER, AND THE FAMILY. By SUSAN MOLLER OKIN. *Basic Books. 216 pages. $19.95.*

TOWARD A FEMINIST THEORY OF THE STATE. By CATHERINE A. MACKINNON. *Harvard University Press. 330 pages. $25.00.*

Reviewed by ELIZABETH KRISTOL

FOR career military, civilian life can sometimes appear aimless and drab. For career feminists, life outside the academy can appear similarly bleak, offering little in the way of glamor, reputation, or moral satisfaction.

"Career feminism" is a relatively recent phenomenon. Women used to become feminists because they hoped that it would open doors to things they wanted to do—like becoming brain surgeons or lawyers or fire jumpers. They looked forward to participating fully in civilian life, and could not wait until the war was over so they could get down to serious business. But other feminists turned out to have a taste and a talent for the battle; they liked the camaraderie, the rhetoric, and the pleasure of championing a cause. When they took shelter in the universities, their transformation into career feminists was complete. The universities today are filled with such professional feminists, women whose research, writing, and scholarship revolve around the nuances of feminist theory. Until recently all they had lacked was a unifying goal, pref-

ELIZABETH KRISTOL *is a writer living in Washington, D.C. Her article, "Who's Afraid of Women's Studies?," appeared in our February 1986 issue.*

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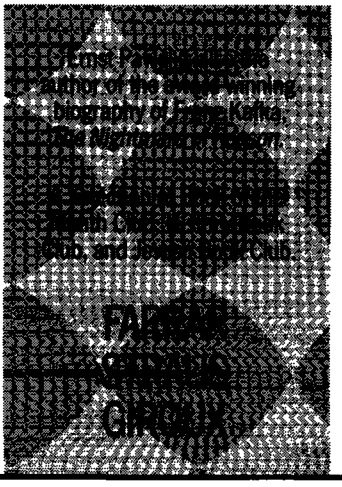

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erably one sufficiently remote as to engage them for a very long time.

They now have such a goal and it is nothing less than the understanding and eventual abolition of gender, "gender" defined as the thoroughgoing social and political implications of being biologically male or female. It seems there is still a problem of there being two sexes in the world, a fact which, if we are not extremely careful, could have consequences. Fortunately, trained experts in the academy can alert us to all the ways in which the consequences of gender can be avoided. In this spirit, two new books by established feminist scholars take conventional political theory to task for overlooking the role of gender and thus developing inadequate notions of justice and the state.

Susan Moller Okin is a professor of politics at Brandeis and the author of *Women in Western Political Thought*, which has become a standard text in feminist political theory since its publication ten years ago. Her latest work, *Justice, Gender, and the Family*, is designed to reach beyond her usual academic audience to address the concerns of all women who are struggling to combine a career and family.

More precisely, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* is a 16-page polemical essay prefaced by 169 pages of analysis, quotation, and footnotes. Okin takes the reader on a laborious tour of the views of the reigning philosophers of justice—John Rawls, Alasdair MacIntyre, Robert Nozick, Michael Walzer—and accuses them of having paid insufficient attention to the family. The family, Okin wishes to show, has been the primary breeding ground for injustice—just as it might one day, in a transformed state, become a breeding ground for equity. "Until there is justice within the family," writes Okin, "women will not be able to gain equality in politics, at work, or in any other sphere." Political theory has erred in focusing its attention on the political realm, assuming the private realm of the family to be immune from oppression, competition, and power struggle. The public/private distinction—long the bane of feminist theorists—is once again revealed to be false: gender dynamics ensure the same dismal picture at home as in the market or workplace.

It is in a lone footnote, and in her concluding chapter on "Toward a Humanistic Justice," that Okin sets forth her own analysis and policy recommendations. Since gender is the primary source of inequality, "the disappearance of gender is a prerequisite for the *complete* development of a nonsexist, fully human theory of justice." In her view, any and all moves toward true justice must begin with the widespread availability of low-cost, high-quality day care. "Only children who are equally mothered and fathered can develop fully the psychological and moral capacities that currently seem to be unevenly distributed between sexes." In a just world, men and women would participate "in more or less equal numbers in every sphere of life." The plan is simple:

> Parental leave during the post-birth months must be available to mothers and fathers on the same terms, to facilitate shared parenting. . . . All workers should have the right . . . to work less than full-time during the first year of a child's life, and to work flexible or somewhat reduced hours at least until the child reaches the age of seven. . . . Large-scale employers should also be required to provide high-quality on-site day care for children from infancy up to school age. . . . Schools should be required to provide high-quality after-school programs, where children can play safely, do their homework, or participate in creative activities.

Finally, since gender often creates an imbalance of power within the home, employers should "make out wage checks equally divided between the earner and the partner who provides all or most of his or her unpaid domestic services."

Some quantitative types might be wondering what all these reforms might cost. Okin has anticipated their concern. First, she endorses redistributive taxes and massive defense cuts. Second, she closes her book by offering a series of questions designed to cast a shadow on the moral integrity of those who would raise the subject of money. This list opens with the moderately guilt-inducing " . . . even if my suggestions would cost, and cost a lot, we have to ask: How much do we care about the injustices of gender?" and builds to the no-holds-barred "How much do we *want* the just families that will produce the kind of citizens we need if we are ever to achieve a just society?" In its mode of thinking, *Justice, Gender, and the Family* bears a striking resemblance to the sign carried by advocates for the homeless, which reads: Housing Now! As a moral sentiment it is hard to quibble with, as a policy program a little thin.

It is something of a relief to turn to Catherine MacKinnon's *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* and to find that there are feminists who recognize the shallowness of unfettered reformist zeal. A relief, that is, until one realizes that Okin's liberal optimism is replaced here by a world view so dark and cynical as to throw into question not only the possibility of reform, but the efficacy of basic speech and action as well. MacKinnon, the author of *Feminism Unmodified* and a professor of law at York University in Toronto, is a well-known feminist legal scholar who has become something of a staple on the lecture and conference circuit, shocking audiences with her scathing critiques of (in ascending order of outrage) the legal system, the pornography industry, and sexual intercourse.

As this latest volume of essays makes clear, MacKinnon's commitment to radicalism is as profound as her contempt for liberalism. In a liberal democracy, says MacKinnon, women are deceived into regarding the state as a "tool of women's betterment and status transformation"—which is a case of the fox guarding the hen-house, if ever there was one. Liberal feminists speak quaintly in terms of "gender inequalities," thus creating the impression that equality once existed, and might possibly be resurrected. In truth, asserts MacKinnon, gender so permeates every

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aspect of our existence that it is naive to assume the possibility of reform.

In a classic example of the law that no good deed goes unpunished, MacKinnon goes on to denounce liberalism for granting women free will. Liberalism perpetuates the view that "social life is comprised of autonomous, intentional, and self-willed actions, with exceptional constraints or qualifications by the state." The good news, according to MacKinnon, is that "this aggregation of freely-acting persons as the descriptive and prescriptive model of social action is replaced, in radical feminism, with a complex political determinism."

Finally, liberalism is pernicious because it fosters the myth that people can be different but equal—as if difference could entail anything other than a hierarchy of power. In Mackinnon's poetic phrase, "difference is the velvet glove on the iron fist of domination." Even Marxism, which MacKinnon considers superior to liberalism in its appreciation of hierarchy and dominance, fails to appreciate the degree to which women are profoundly unfree. While Marxists and liberals might have thought they were paying women a compliment by assuming they were made of noble enough matter to conduct their domestic lives unsupervised, MacKinnon resents women's exclusion from a male-constructed deterministic scheme: "When men work, they become workers, Marx's human beings. When women work, they remain wives and mothers, inadequate ones." Marxism as good as slapped women in the face when it deprived them of the full benefits of dehumanization.

MacKinnon's world view is unremittingly bleak. Gender—and only gender—breathes life into women, but it soon saps that life away. Male dominance is the Adam's rib from which woman is created: it is "perhaps the most pervasive and tenacious system of power in history" and "is metaphysically nearly perfect." The very foundations of human society—thought, language, sexuality, the family, the state—exist solely in reference to men: "There is no such thing as a woman as such." With this utterance, MacKinnon manages to bring feminism full circle by adding a whole new ontological dimension to the pre-feminist lament, "I am nothing without a man."

MacKinnon does not attempt to develop a political theory, at least not of the sort that we are used to seeing. She admits (or boasts) that feminism "has a theory of power but lacks a specific theory of its state form." While Okin at least gives us a glimpse of what a gender-lite society might look like, it is not at all clear what MacKinnon's utopia would resemble, or whether she believes in even the philosophic possibility of a gender-free state. MacKinnon faces an especially difficult challenge, since she rejects what most theorists would regard as necessary building blocks of any political system—the individual, the family, the class. She has exposed the individual as a chimera; the family as institutionalized rape and incest; class as an inadequate description of power structures.

The pessimism of MacKinnon's world view is paralyzing but it is also convenient; those who share her view (and there are a considerable number) feel no need to tackle practical policy considerations or to venture outside the purview of feminist theory. More appealing still, they are guaranteed the moral righteousness that accompanies perpetual victim status; if there were ever to be a Wide World of Feminism, its motto might well be "The thrill of defeat, the agony of victory."

Okin and MacKinnon define the liberal-radical spectrum of contemporary academic feminism, which in recent years has adopted a deterministic world view based on gender. The appeal of determinism is readily apparent; its ultimate futility less so. There is much cowardice underlying any deterministic outlook. Contemporary feminists, who in the past two decades have achieved numerous freedoms and rights, seem exceedingly reluctant to put those freedoms to the test. Rather, they spin out ever-

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growing reasons why those freedoms are not quite so perfectly realized as they might be, gender being as insidious as it is, and all.

To which it seems only fair to respond: if you place greater value on making use of freedom than on measuring it, you will find that it is far better to act *as if* you were free than to sit out the game until the whole determinism business can be resolved once and for all. Certainly, to take an example of far greater moment than the travails of upper-middle-class women, this is the lesson of recent political events: when Poles, East Germans, and Czechs acted as if they had greater rights and liberties than their regimes accorded them, they succeeded in enlarging their scope of freedom.

As for those feminists who prefer to cling to the belief that they are nonentities, incapacitated by gender from making a valid contribution to society, they will surely help cause that prophecy to come true.

What Is Reality?

THE EXAMINED LIFE. By ROBERT NOZICK. *Simon & Schuster. 308 pp. $21.95.*

Reviewed by CRAIG S. LERNER

WITH his first two books, Robert Nozick, professor of philosophy at Harvard, set off metaphysical tremors in the American academy. In *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (1974), when all about him were praising John Rawls's ponderous defense of the welfare state (*A Theory of Justice,* 1971), the libertarian Nozick unveiled a bold and provocative argument: individuals have property rights; governmental redistribution of wealth is unjust. Wrote one Left philosopher in a panic, Nozick demanded a response "lest one feel compelled to commit Marx and Keynes to the flames and vote for Ronald Reagan in 1976."

Nozick's second book, *Philosophical Explanations* (1981), challenged the logical positivism regnant in departments of philosophy. According to Ludwig Wittgenstein, the patron saint of this school, the things one would most like to speak of—what is good, what is just—are precisely those things one cannot speak of meaningfully. Nozick, dismissing logical positivists as "puritans of the mind," embarked instead on a "humanistic philosophy." To judge from the book's chapter headings alone—"Free Will," "Foundation of Ethics," "Philosophy and the Meaning of Life," etc.—there was little he did not dare to speak of.

Nozick's most recent book, *The Examined Life,* covers similar, that is, extensive, terrain. "Living and what is important in life" is the book's proclaimed subject. It consists of twenty-seven chapters beginning with "Dying" and concluding with "A Portrait of the Philosopher as a Young Man." In between, Nozick serves up wisdom on topics as various as sex ("not simply a matter of frictional force . . . one also can engage in metaphysical exploration"); food ("[savor] the explosive joy and sexuality of the strawberry"); and materialism ("I want to say that no one, neither others nor the person himself, should assess someone's importance by his wealth"). But none of this is intended to be a final word. Quite the contrary—Nozick, a self-styled Socrates, pesters the reader with questions that remain ostentatiously unanswered as a further invitation to the examined life.

THE book's central question, and the one that ties together the assorted subsidiary questions, is, what is "reality"? "Not the same as what exists," reality proves elusive even to so determined a seeker as Nozick. To make a long story short, "reality" turns out to contain sixty things—"value, meaning, importance, weight, depth, amplitude, intensity, vividness," etc. These variables are plotted by Nozick into matrices of various shapes and dimensions. (My favorite is a cube.) "We each," he writes, "contemplate and live the wildest and best-structured matrix we've been able to understand thus far, even as we are ready to transform it." Nozick's hope is that we will not simply decipher reality, but "respond" to it, thereby becoming "more real."

What about the problem of evil? Is it part of reality, and do those who become more evil thereby become more real? "Wasn't Iago real? Wasn't Hitler? How then do I exclude dark paths?" Nozick wrestles with these questions off and on for a hundred pages before arriving at a happy ending: we *can* exclude dark paths. Those who expand their own reality by diminishing the reality of others are stunted human beings. It is not Iago or Hitler but "vessels of light" like Socrates, Buddha, Gandhi, Lincoln, Einstein, Jesus, and Moses who illuminate the surest paths to heightened reality. Nozick's "ethic of light" is founded upon the allure of these vessels, "the allure of goodness."

The repudiation of an "egotistical stance" toward reality leads Nozick, in a surprise twist, to a repudiation of egotistical—i.e., libertarian—politics. Democratic institutions, he now believes, are not simply frameworks that allow us, selfishly, to become as real as we can be. Rather, these institutions "express" our notions of reality, including "our desired mutual relations." Consequently, "the libertarian position I once propounded now seems to me seriously inadequate. . . ."

IT IS a wonderful thing to behold a libertarian talking up "ties of concern and solidarity." It is, similarly, a wonderful thing when a sinner finds God. Yet when a repentant sinner sets himself up as a saint, or when a lapsed libertarian starts telling us to spread the reality, we need to be wary. Ties of concern and solidarity are not an incantation which, said seven times, magically comes true. Apparently unbeknownst to Nozick, the question of *how* to forge a community or common good out of the multiplicity of individual goods has exercised many of humanity's more capable minds for millennia, and his own contribu-

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tion to the discussion, when he descends from the rarefied heights of inoffensive abstraction, is small.

Take the phrase, "allure of goodness." What is meant by it? All individuals pursue their own good, it may be true, but some individuals pursue a good that is detrimental to that of others. Nonetheless, Nozick would have us aspire to an ethics according to which we "trust our inclinations." He would thus resolve the classic tension between duty and desire by dissolving it.

Precisely what goodness Nozick himself finds so alluring is never clear. He is oblivious, for example, of the degree to which his various spiritual teachers work at cross-purposes; to readers unpersuaded by Einstein's advocacy of world government, or Gandhi's of pacifism, he has nothing to say. He does identify a lowest common denominator of spiritual greatness, "kindness, nonviolence, love of living things," etc., which probably describes a quarter of the human race. But then elsewhere he would seem to deny that even this is central to goodness, for he writes that Eastern mystics "experience . . . the *very* deepest reality" through withdrawal and solipsistic meditation.

So despite his parading of vessels of light, most readers will be left in the dark by Nozick's reality. Worse, they will feel cheated. Treat life, he writes, as a one-hundred-point exam. You get ninety points for being a "functioning" human being, i.e., for being able to write your name. The "question of how to live . . . determine[s] only how many [you get] of the remaining ten possible points," and "whether we managed to get six or seven points" is "less important than that we already had ninety points, willy-nilly." Nozick has thus composed hundreds of pages telling us to examine ourselves and become more real only to conclude that the only thing at stake is a point or two, maybe the difference between an A— and an A.

By asking the questions of "living and what is important in life," Robert Nozick may have done something to shore up the reputation of philosophy as a humanistic enterprise. But the fact that Socrates asked a lot of questions does not mean that everyone who asks a lot of questions is a Socrates. If p then q does not imply if q then p. This much at least Nozick might have learned from the logical positivists.

Rise and Fall

The Ambition and the Power. By John M. Barry. *Viking. 768 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by Robert Kagan

In Washington every decision made, every word spoken, every scandal uncovered, occurs in the context of a perpetual political struggle among the parties, the ideologies, and the branches of government that together wield power in America. This fact often eludes the press, which tends to divide scandals, for instance, into the categories of genuine and/or "political." But in Washington all scandals are political. As John M. Barry shows in *The Ambition and the Power,* James C. Wright's recent fall from power as Speaker of the House (and the nation's most prominent Democrat) was no more "about" ethics violations than Oliver North's was about security fences and "arms for hostages." Both were surrogates for more fundamental battles.

From his first day as Speaker, Jim Wright set out openly and unabashedly to enlarge the powers of Congress, of his party, and of his position within that party at the expense of the President, the Republican party, opponents within his own party, and anyone else who stood in the way. What was behind Wright's drive for power? The answer, at least according to Barry's account, is simple, timeless, yet often forgotten. As Disraeli once said of Parliament, "We come here for fame."

Every politician who ever lived shares this dream. What distinguishes the merely ambitious from the too ambitious is the willing-

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Robert Kagan *is currently working on a book about U.S. policy in Nicaragua, which will be published by Poseidon Press.*

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ness, on occasion, to sacrifice power for principle, to accept necessary limits, and to recognize that lasting fame often comes from just such sacrifices. Apparently Jim Wright's ambition was untempered by these considerations. Although he claimed to emulate Sam Rayburn, the legendary Texan of whom another Texas Democrat, Maury Maverick, once said, "He would sell out his grandmother if he thought that would again make him Speaker of the House," Rayburn's love of power was modest compared with Wright's.

Jim Wright ruled the House with a heavy hand. His abuse of House rules will long be remembered, particularly by Republicans whose few rights as the minority the Speaker eagerly trampled. Once, in a parliamentary maneuver to win a vote, Wright created two "legislative days" on the same calendar day. On another occasion, trying to pressure a wavering colleague into switching his vote, Wright held open the time for casting ballots so long past the traditional allotment that the event has become notorious in the House as "the longest vote." Trivial as these stunts may seem, they created a mood of defiant insurrection among his political opponents and they transformed the image of Congressman Newt Gingrich (R.-Ga.), who had made Wright's destruction his personal goal, from that of an "irresponsible" firebrand to that of a recognized leader of his party.

Even Democrats complained of Wright's leadership. Barry recounts many instances in which the Speaker lied or broke promises to close Democratic associates. He rarely consulted with colleagues before making decisions, but he expected his troops to follow him even at what many Democrats believed was great political risk to themselves and their party. Wright's handling of the congressional pay raise, for example, an issue which he decided, by himself, to put to a politically embarrassing vote, infuriated friends and enemies alike and ate away at his support as the scandal over his finances grew.

Wright's leadership differed dramatically from that of his predecessor, Thomas P. ("Tip") O'Neill. Where O'Neill was content to manage the House, Wright preferred to coerce it. But then, Wright was also more ambitious than O'Neill, who, though he often opposed the policies of Ronald Reagan, saw no virtue in an all-out war with the President. Wright, by contrast, hated and envied Reagan, and was bent on open political combat.

In furthering his ambitions, Wright engaged in a public battle with the executive branch over both domestic and foreign policy. When nominated for the Speakership in 1986, he told his Democratic colleagues he wanted the legislative branch to "renew its rightful role as the major initiator of policy for the United States." According to Barry, Wright sought a "new balance" between the branches that "would allow a Speaker to confront a strong President as a near equal and to dominate a weak President." As Speaker, he pushed hard to "govern the country from the House."

But govern toward what end? In domestic policy, Wright's position can be summed up easily. He was a "tax-and-spend" Democrat. The very day he was elected Speaker he called for new taxes, and he never stopped calling for them. The purpose, he made clear, was to increase government spending. He fought efforts by conservative Southern Democrats to tie tax increases directly to deeper cuts in the budget, and supported Northern liberals who wanted to put new tax revenues into more expensive welfare programs.

Wright may have fancied himself a New Deal/Great Society Democrat, like Rayburn and Lyndon Johnson before him—Barry, at any rate, never really questions these pretensions—but his commitment to increased spending, and therefore to increased taxing, was driven by other impulses. He wanted to fight Reagan (who sought lower taxes and lower spending). He wanted to prove to the suspicious, powerful, and therefore dangerous liberal bloc within his own party that he was not a Texas conservative. Above all, spending was a crucial aspect of his power as Speaker. Congressmen provide services to their constituents, and a powerful Speaker can decide who gets to give what, and how much. He rewards loyalty with largesse, punishes disloyalty with largesse withheld. Tight spending makes a Speaker's job difficult; free spending makes him strong and popular.

In the end, however, Wright chose the wrong turf on which to fight Reagan. By refusing to raise taxes, refusing to cut the defense budget, and successfully blaming federal deficits on the Democratic Congress, Reagan checkmated the acquisitive legislative branch *and* its power-hungry Speaker. Wright's battle with Reagan over taxes and the budget hurt the Speaker more than it hurt the President, and led to dangerous conflicts with other Democrats who believed the call for new taxes was politically suicidal.

BLOCKED by Reagan on the domestic front, Wright ventured into for-

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eign policy, where his ambition took him well beyond the traditional limits of congressional behavior. In foreign affairs, Wright once said, "I must uphold the legislative branch as co-equal with the executive. . . . The people who wrote the Constitution never intended the Congress to be subservient." Of his controversial involvement in Central American diplomacy, Wright told NBC's Tom Brokaw, "I don't need the permission of the administration. I represent the American people too."

Barry, however, believes that Nicaragua "was perhaps the one issue over which a Speakership could be lost," and the reason had to do with Wright's own public record on Central America. The fact was that the large Left-liberal bloc of House Democrats, for whom the battle against *contra* aid was a defining issue, mistrusted Wright, and with good reason. In 1978, as House majority leader, he had joined more than 70 conservative Congressmen in sending a letter to then-President Carter, urging him "to do your utmost to demonstrate the support of the United States government for the government of Nicaragua and President Anastasio Somoza, a long and consistent ally of the United States." The letter warned that Nicaragua might otherwise fall to the Sandinistas, "whose leaders have been trained in Havana and Moscow and whose goal is to make Nicaragua the new Cuba of the Western hemisphere."

With such past views on record, Wright would probably have been better off staying away from too salient a role in the controversy over *contra* aid. But when the Reagan administration, hobbled by its own Iran-*contra* scandal, offered to negotiate a deal, the Speaker could not resist the chance to act as a "co-equal" in foreign policy.

Once again, principle and ideology played little role in his actions. Wright obviously could not allow himself to be seen by liberals as an ally of the administration's anti-Sandinista policies, but neither could he simply support the Sandinista position and thereby risk the anger of anti-Communist Southern Democrats. In his effort to avoid the trap, Wright broke new ground for legislative power, involving Congress deeply in the conduct of foreign policy and actually attempting to supplant the executive branch as the nation's representative abroad. Wright sought to have at least as much influence over events in Central America as the administration. In the end, he had more.

At a time when the official policy of the administration was still opposed to negotiations, Wright negotiated directly with the Sandinistas. He also threatened to cut foreign aid to Honduras and El Salvador if those countries did not cooperate in promoting "the peace process." He advised the *contra* leaders they would never again receive military aid, and should strike the best deal they could with the Sandinistas. He publicized clas-

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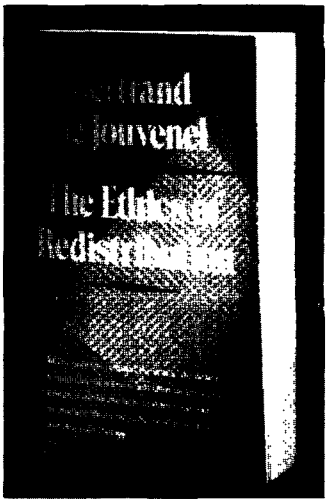

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Above all, the man who had once warned of a "new Cuba" became a consistent apologist for the Sandinistas, excusing their censorship of *La Prensa,* their attempts to intimidate the Catholic Church, and their continuing support for guerrillas fighting against the government of his erstwhile "friend," José Napoleón Duarte of El Salvador. According to Barry, early in 1987 Louis Stokes, the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, advised Wright of a cable that had been intercepted on its way to Managua from the Sandinista embassy in Washington. In their analysis of Congress, the Sandinistas had concluded that Wright was the key to ending *contra* aid. They were right.

Yet as Barry tells the story, once again Wright had chosen the wrong issue, and in the end his foreign-policy forays hurt him in Congress as much as his other attempts to expand his power. They "radicalized" the Republicans, including such normally cool heads as Richard C. Cheney and Robert Michel. They even, according to Barry, damaged him among Democrats. If so, it is no small irony. Wright had justified his intrusions into diplomacy on the grounds that he represented the American people as much as the President did. In fact, he did not even represent the Congress, the House, or his own party.

IT WOULD BE satisfying to conclude that attempts like Wright's to upset the balance among the branches, to exceed traditional and constitutional limits, will always end in failure. But that would be precisely the wrong lesson to draw. True, Wright made himself vulnerable, but he might have survived nevertheless if not for Newt Gingrich, who was willing to use against him a weapon which most conservatives and Republicans shied away from: scandal.

Barry records how Gingrich and his staff kept the issue of Wright's financial ethics alive for over a year when few cared about it and when most Republican Congressmen were embarrassed by Gingrich's outspoken attacks on the Speaker. It was, indeed, a dirty business, and after reading Barry's account one feels some sympathy for Wright in his ordeal. He was brought down, as it happens, in a manner unpleasantly familiar to veterans of the Reagan administration itself. After more than a year of scrutiny by the press, the House Ethics Committee, and an "independent counsel," most charges against him remained unproven, although the counsel, Richard Phelan, conducted his work with the ferocity and single-mindedness of a district attorney running for mayor. The bevy of investigators, appointed and self-appointed, spared no effort to find Wright guilty of something, yet even so they ended up long on the "appearance" of impropriety, short on hard evidence.

That appearance, however, was enough to destroy Wright's career. The investigation and its coverage in the press made Wright a liability to the Democratic party, and the House Ethics Committee, normally a lenient court, was therefore unusually hard on him. Composed not of impartial jurors but of twelve politicians with a direct stake in the outcome, the committee protected the interests of both parties by obtaining Wright's resignation. In the final "plea bargain," the committee did not ask for, or need, an admission of guilt.

Some might prefer Wright to have fallen in a "cleaner" way, not harassed over dubious financial ledgers but confronted directly for his constitutional transgressions and lust for power. Yet Wright was not about to go any other way, and one need no more shed tears for him than liberals and Democrats shed tears for Oliver North, Edwin Meese, Theodore Olson, Robert Bork, John Tower, and all the rest. In the 1980's, what Leonard Garment has called "prosecutorial politics" became the liberals' weapon of choice for fighting ideological and political battles. Scandal was their means of weakening a presidency they could not win at the ballot box, of soiling the Republican party, of discrediting conservative ideas. For Republicans, conservatives, and the executive branch, it was important that Jim Wright, the highest-ranking Democrat in Congress, fall by the same sword that until then had been wielded fearlessly by his comrades. Only when they realized that Democratic congressmen, too, could become victims of scandal-mongering would they have an incentive to stop.

TOWARD the end of his time in office, drowning in accusations, Wright worried aloud that "history will not record me accurately." If history errs, however, it will be because too much attention was paid to Wright's alleged financial misdeeds, and not enough to the larger matters at stake in his rise and fall from power. John M. Barry has not made that mistake. His remarkable chronicle of Jim Wright's two years as Speaker provides much for historians and politicians to ponder.

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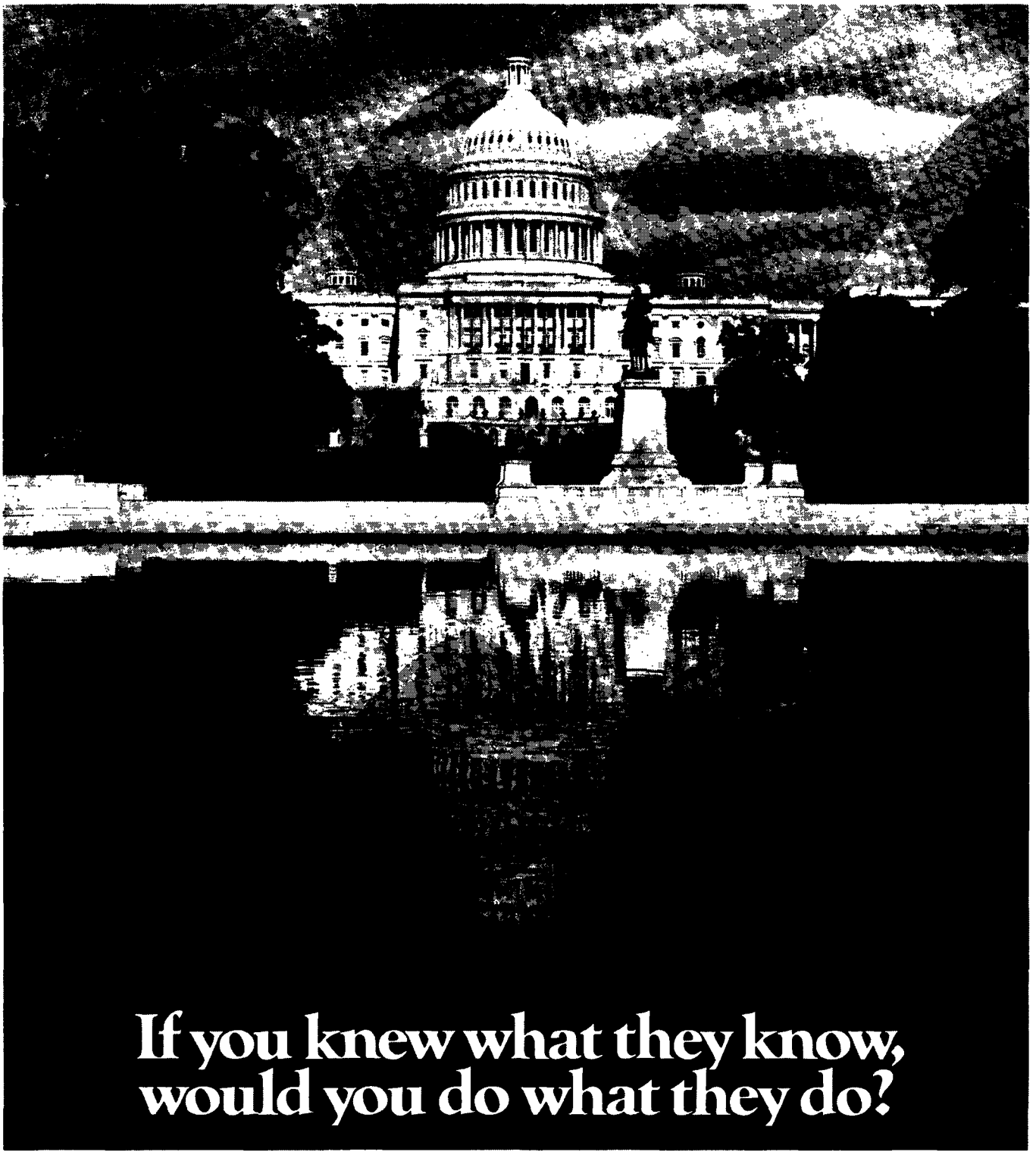

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